

**A critical evaluation of New Zealand's Antarctic art
programmes, 1957-2011**

ANTA 604

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Abstract

The author considers the programmes that have enabled artists to travel to Antarctica as part of the New Zealand Antarctic programme between 1957 and 2011. Details of artists and their visits are given, followed by a descriptive history of the artist programme itself, outlining its origins, development and current status. Finally the artists' opinions and expectations of their visit are described and the art that has been produced is considered. The programme is currently held to be in good shape, with Antarctica New Zealand satisfied with its outcomes and artists keen to participate.

Introduction

Sending artists to Antarctica at public expense has been happening in New Zealand for more than fifty years. Over this period the circumstances of such visits have changed a great deal: how visits are funded, how artists are selected, what the stated purpose of a visit is, and what expectations exist to produce something after a visit, have all to some extent been subject to change.

Part one of this report will list the artists who have taken part, outline their background and standing and briefly describe the circumstances of their visit.

Part two will then describe the programmes that have existed and their changing characteristics. The equivalent programmes of other countries will be mentioned although it is beyond the scope of this document to do a detailed international evaluation.

Part three of this report will consider the work of the artists who have visited Antarctica on New Zealand programmes and an attempt will be made to answer the following questions:

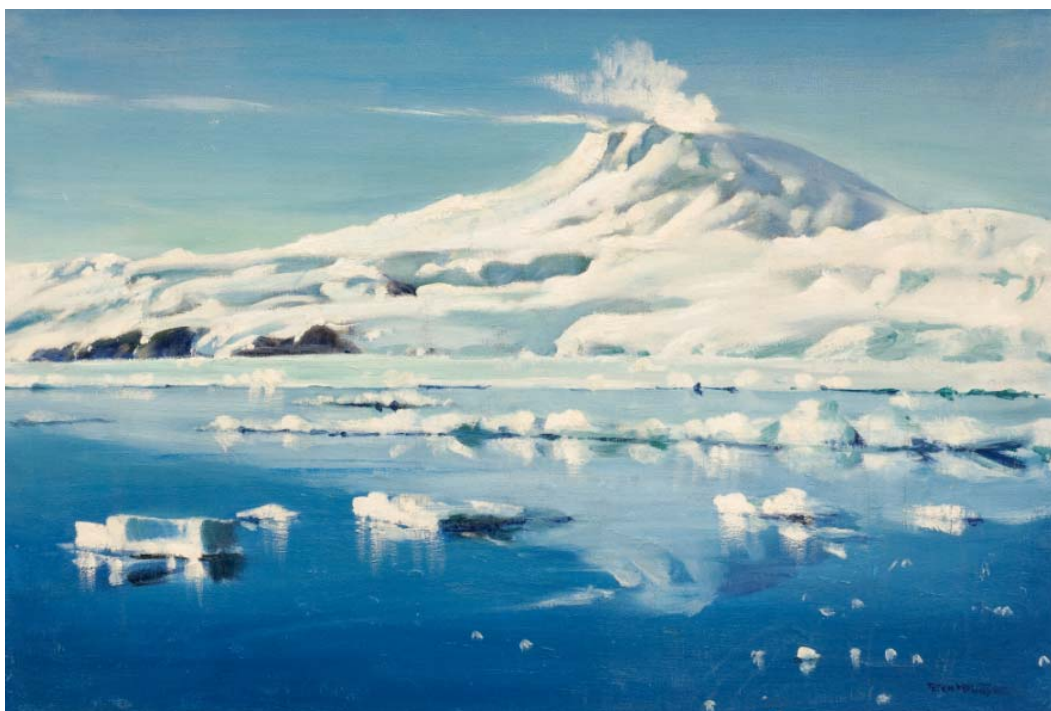
- What expectations have participating artists had?
- What expectations have the programmes' funders had?
- What opportunities have there been for publishing, performing or exhibiting Antarctic art?
- How has the success of programmes been measured?
- What has the critical reception of Antarctic art been?
- Have subsidised visits to Antarctica had a lasting effect on artists' work?

The answers to these questions lead to the central issues of this analysis which are firstly whether the novels, poetry, painting, music, sculpture, dance, jewellery and photographs generated by the New Zealand programmes constitute *New Zealand Antarctic Art*, with its own flavours, idioms and traditions; and secondly whether this output is held to be of value, substance and durability – put plainly, whether it is any good.

Part one – the artists

Peter McIntyre – invited artist

The first New Zealand artist to visit Antarctica with official support, and for no other reason than as an artist, was Peter McIntyre (1910-1995). His first visit was cut short by jaundice but he was able to go again the following season. At the time of these visits, in 1957/8 and 1959, he enjoyed considerable popular, if not critical, acclaim. McIntyre was a celebrated official war artist, having created images of New Zealand soldiers in North Africa and Italy that tallied precisely with the public mood and which have achieved lasting fame. His turning away from a more avant-garde style, with which he had experimented in pre-war London, assured his popularity with the general public - and his odium with critics. His work was dismissed, for example, as “sleek melodrama...[bearing]... the same relationship to art as the high-powered glossy prose of a tourist pamphlet to a fine poem, or Mantovani to Mozart.”¹ He describes his visits in detail in his autobiography.² They came about as the result of a chance encounter at a party with John McBeath, New Zealand’s Chief of Naval Staff. A year of negotiating with the American Navy followed, and the first trip was finally arranged with the support, indeed intervention, of Prime Minister Walter Nash.



Peter McIntyre - *Mt Erebus, Antarctica*

Collection Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu, Presented by Diana Lady Isaac, 2009

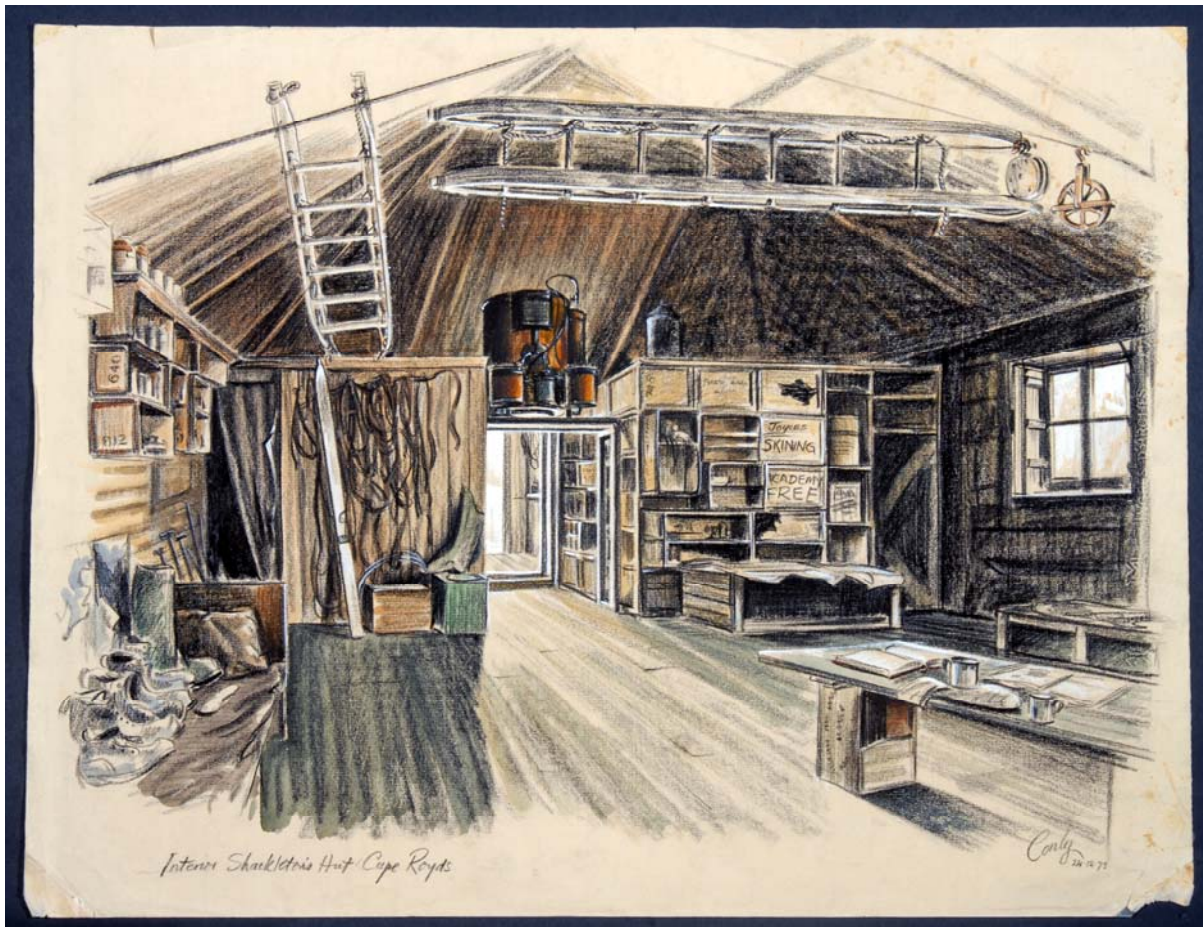
Source: Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu

¹ Nelson Kenny writing as JNK, *Christchurch Press*, March 1962

² Peter McIntyre / *The painted years* (Reed, 1962)

Maurice Conly – invited artist

Maurice Conly (1920-1995) was an official artist intermittently employed by the Royal New Zealand Air Force. He visited Antarctica in 1970 and again in 1974. He had by then had a long career as an illustrator of military aviation scenes in New Zealand, the South Pacific and Vietnam. He also worked as a commercial artist and designer of coins and stamps. His visits to Antarctica are described in a tie-in book published in 1977³ and in his autobiography⁴. He can be unequivocally described as a supremely accomplished illustrator, entirely at home illustrating men and machinery at work. He was the subject of a retrospective exhibition at the Air Force Museum of New Zealand in 1995.



Maurice Conly – *Interior of Shackleton's hut*
Air Force Museum of New Zealand
Source: Air Force Museum of New Zealand

³ Maurice Conly / *Ice on my palette* (Whitcoulls, 1977)

⁴ Maurice Conly / *Send for the artist* (Random House, 1995)

Austen Deans – invited artist

Austen Deans (1915-) follows in the same tradition as McIntyre and Conly: a romantic, realist painter with direct popular appeal entirely at odds with the directions that academic New Zealand art has taken. He too had experimented with abstraction before the war and had turned away from it decisively. He too had been a serving soldier. Deans visited Antarctica in 1981 at the suggestion of Speaker of the House, Sir Richard Harrison. An exhibition was held at the Beehive but to Deans's dismay intense political activity during 1984 overshadowed the event⁵. A selection of Deans's Antarctic work was shown at the Christchurch Art Gallery in 2008.



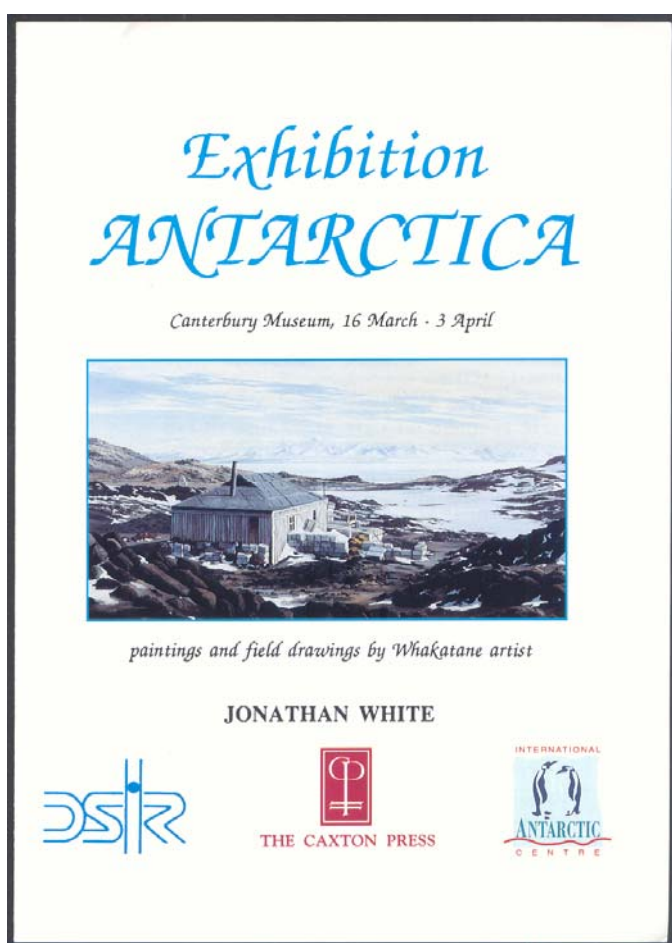
Antarctic Stories, exhibition held Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu, 21 June 2008 – 5 October 2008
Source: Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu

⁵ Nathalie Brown / *Capturing mountains: the life and art of Austen Deans* (Wiley, 2010)

Jonathan White – invited artist

A fourth traditional, representational artist visited Antarctica in November 1989. Best known for his luscious depictions of New Zealand landscapes, invariably heavily treed, Jonathan White (1938-) expressed a desire to visit Antarctica as early as 1987⁶. He is the author of *Jonathan White's New Zealand*⁷, a collection of extravagantly rich landscape paintings of remote parts of New Zealand.

His visit was arranged by Antarctica New Zealand's predecessor, the Antarctic Division of the DSIR, explicitly to promote the work of the Antarctic Heritage Trust by painting the historic huts. His intention was to raise funds for the Trust. Exhibitions of this work were held in Tauranga, Whakatane, Christchurch, Wellington and Auckland.⁸



Catalogue for Jonathan White's Christchurch Exhibition
Source: Antarctica New Zealand

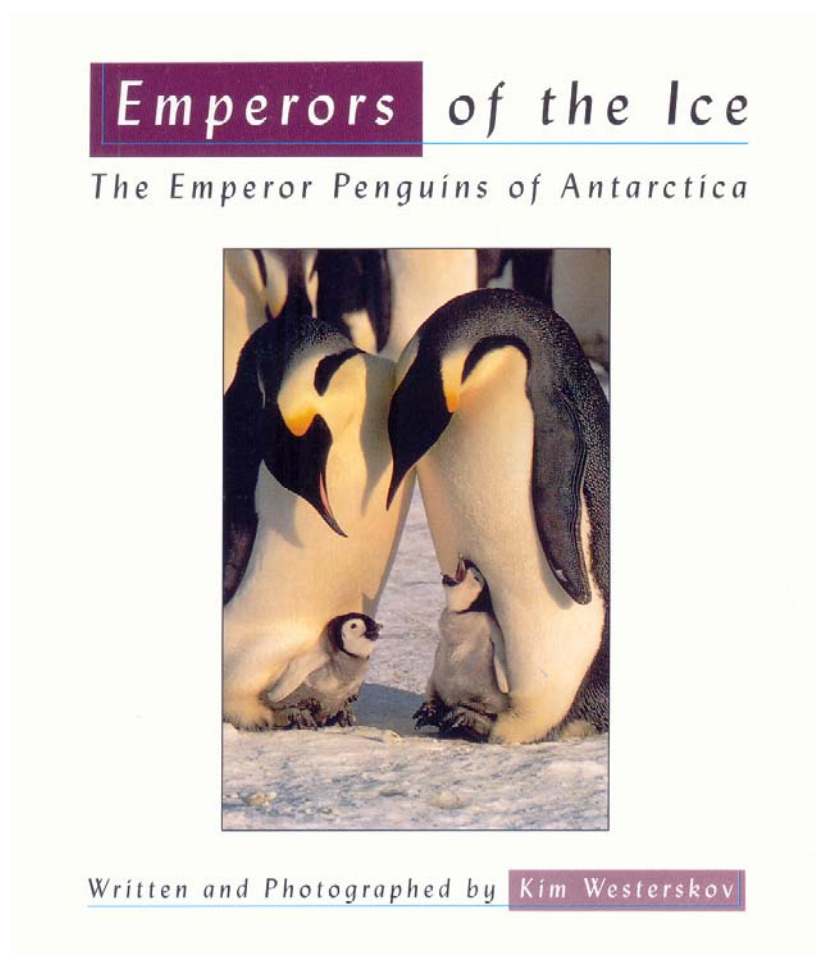
⁶ Kim Paterson / *Painting with passion* in *New Zealand Woman's Weekly*, 27 July 1987, p. 16

⁷ *Jonathan White's New Zealand* (Orakau House, 1986)

⁸ Personal communication, 17 December 2010

Kim Westerskov – invited artist/scientist

In 1990 marine scientist, writer and photographer Kim Westerskov (1947-) was invited to visit Antarctica. American born Westerskov has written widely on wildlife, natural history and conservation, and is a highly regarded wildlife photographer. He has published numerous books for adults and children on marine life and the sea. His trip to Antarctica was a commission specifically to produce a series of publicity photographs and associated articles for the New Zealand Antarctic programme. His brief was to produce stories and photographs on three particular topics: wintering over, the ozone hole and Winfly (the first flights from Christchurch each season, usually in August). Equipment and film were provided, ownership and copyright in the finished product resided with the Crown.⁹



The emperor penguins of Antarctica book cover¹⁰

⁹ Antarctica New Zealand archives

¹⁰ Kim Westerskov / *The emperor penguins of Antarctica* (Omnibus, 1997)

John Hamilton – invited artist

John Hamilton (1919-1993) was a British artist who was a founding member of the UK Antarctic Heritage Trust. He too had been a soldier and painted several series of marine paintings which subsequently appeared as books, for example one on the war in the Falkland Islands¹¹. He also published books on painting techniques¹². He had visited and painted on the Antarctic Peninsula and his intention in travelling to Antarctica with the New Zealand Antarctic programme was to paint in the Ross Sea area. All these paintings would then form an ambitiously large collection which would form a book tentatively entitled *Explorers: the history of Antarctic explorers in paint*.¹³ The book was never published.



John Hamilton – South Georgia. HMS Endurance among the icebergs
Source: *The helicopter story of the Falklands campaign*, p. 11

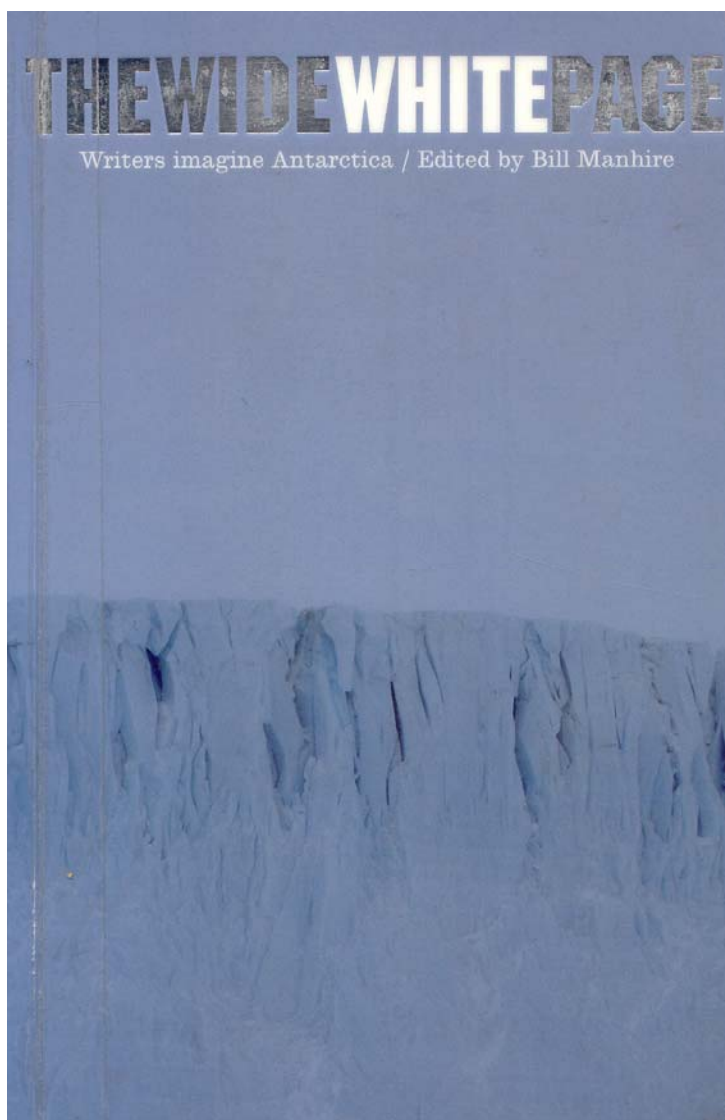
¹¹ John Hamilton / *The helicopter story of the Falklands campaign* (David and Charles, 1990)

¹² *The complete sketching book* (Studio Vista, 1998) was a synthesis of two earlier books: *Sketching with a pencil* (1989) and *Sketching at home* (1991).

¹³ Antarctica New Zealand archives hold a lengthy correspondence concerning this project.

Bill Manhire – invited artist

Bill Manhire (1946-) is a poet, writer, editor and broadcaster of considerable repute. He is a lecturer in English and creative writing at Victoria University, Wellington. He has received numerous awards and recognitions for his own writing and for his work championing other writers. He is a Fellow of the Royal Society of New Zealand. Manhire visited Antarctica on the inaugural Artists to Antarctica programme in 1997, along with Nigel Brown and Chris Orsman. He is the editor of *The wide white page*,¹⁴ an interesting introduction to some of the classics of Antarctic literature.



The wide white page book cover

¹⁴ Bill Manhire / *The wide white page: writers imagine Antarctica* (Victoria University Press, 2004)

Nigel Brown – Arts Fellow

Nigel Brown (1949-) is a celebrated painter whose highly individual use of text within and especially around his paintings makes them immediately recognizable. His paintings deal regularly with important human problems relating to history, land, identity and morality. These investigations are supported by a deceptively crude, blocky style that is in fact subtle and visually arresting. He visited Antarctica with Bill Manhire and Chris Orsman.

Of his trip, Nigel Brown has said: “Obviously it was quite a different place to experience, and the paintings reflect that. I used a very cool palette, for example, and everyone down there was very heavily dressed, and their body language was quite different...I liked the challenge of getting a painting finished in one afternoon – out in the wind, with the paper pinned down by rocks. Sometimes the stimulus of a new environment works well.”¹⁵



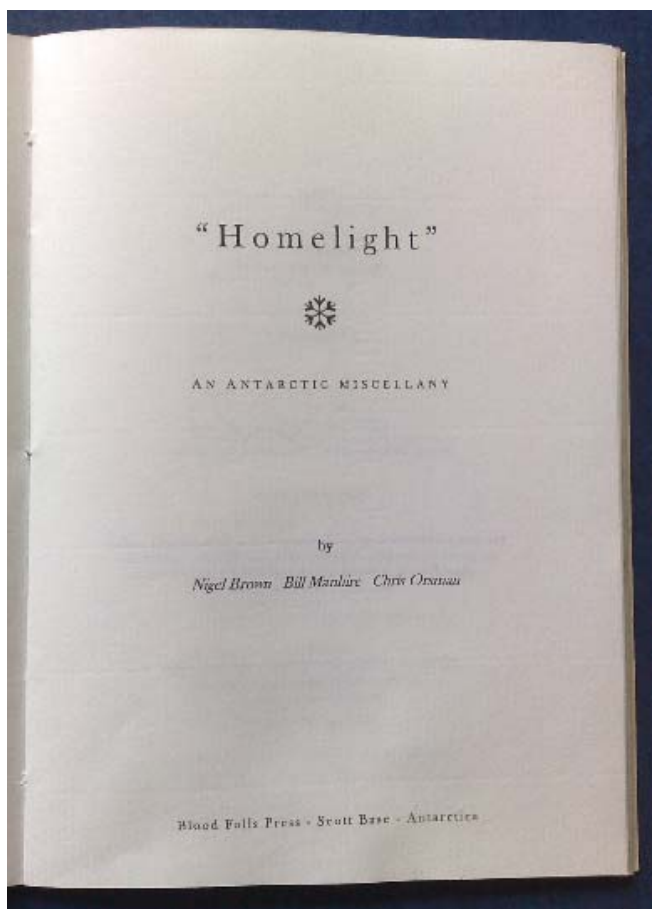
Nigel Brown – *Warmth is something to be worked at*
Collection Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu
Source: Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu

¹⁵ *Pinned down* in Art News, Summer 1998, p. 28

Chris Orsman – Arts Fellow

Chris Orsman (1935-) is a poet and writer whose first collection of poems, *Ornamental Gorse* was published in 1994. It has been stated that his poetry's "... verbal resourcefulness perhaps reflects the poet's lexicographic parentage¹⁶ but [it] is always rigorously controlled to serve a moral and intellectual seriousness. The effect is of intense cerebration, rich in wordplay but never merely playful."¹⁷ He is the founder of Pemmican Press.

Orsman, Brown and Manhire travelled together to Antarctica and collaborated on *Homelight*, a book written, illustrated and produced in Antarctica and subsequently published in a limited facsimile edition¹⁸. A film of their visit, including the making of this book, was produced.¹⁹



Homelight title page

¹⁶ He is the son of lexicographer Harry Orsman (1928-2002).

¹⁷ *The Oxford Companion to New Zealand Literature*, edited by Roger Robinson and Nelson Wattie (1998).

¹⁸ Nigel Brown, Bill Manhire and Chris Orsman / *Homelight : an Antarctic miscellany* (Pemmican Press, 1998)

¹⁹ *Unframed continent: artists in Antarctica*, Natural History New Zealand (1999)

Margaret Mahy – Arts Fellow

Margaret Mahy (1936-) is New Zealand's best known and most prolific children's author. She has written for all reading ages from picture books through to sophisticated thrillers for teenagers. The supernatural, magic and mystery are recurring themes in her work. After her visit to Antarctica she wrote *The riddle of the frozen phantom*,²⁰ an expertly crafted, rather formulaic adventure story, that, she says, owes something to the "...nonsense tradition of Lear and Carroll."²¹



Riddle of the frozen phantom book cover

²⁰ Margaret Mahy / *The riddle of the frozen phantom* (Collins, 1991)

²¹ Rayma Turton / *Talking with Margaret Mahy*, in *Magpies*, March 2002, p. 6

Margaret Elliot – Arts Fellow

Margaret Elliot (1952-) is a painter who visited Antarctica in 1998. Her work there resulted in the exhibition *Tented Spaces* at Christchurch Art Gallery in 2003. This exhibition treated the tent as metaphor, a symbol of the temporary human presence in Antarctica, as well as an echo of triangular mountain peaks. Kathryn Yusoff wrote: "Margaret's paintings do not evoke Antarctica as utopia, as is the historical genre of Antarctic art, but concentrate on the processes of inscribing the landscape."²²

Antarctica has remained a central theme in Margaret Elliot's art practice and she has visited it privately twice more.



Margaret Elliot – Shelters 5

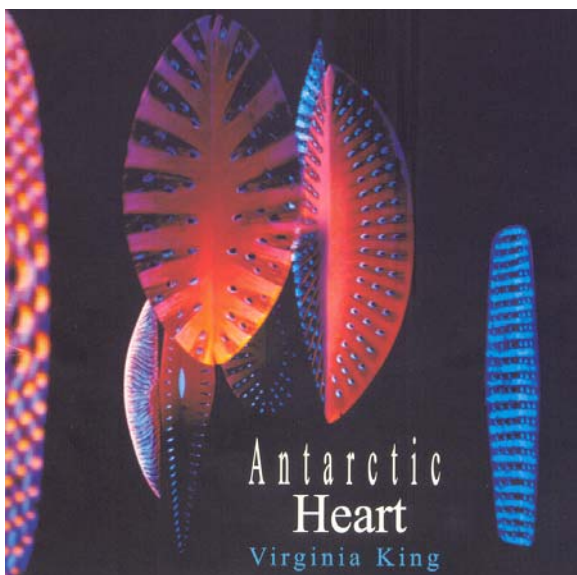
Source: Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu

²² Kathryn Yusoff / *Tented spaces*, in Christchurch Art Gallery Bulletin 135, p. 18

Virginia King – Arts Fellow

Virginia King (1946-) is a sculptor based in Auckland. She visited Antarctica with composer Chris Cree Brown in 1999 and collaborated with him on *Antarctic Heart*, a multi-media exhibition at Christchurch Art Gallery held in 2003. King was fascinated by the micro-organisms that live below and within the rocks and snow of Antarctica, surviving in an extraordinarily harsh environment. She sculpted microscopic diatoms in macrocarpa, suspending them in ultra-violet light, to a soundtrack by Chris Cree Brown.

She has described her visit to Antarctica as: “a treasure that I can reflect on at any time and that has the ability to transform the mundane.”²³



Antarctic heart cover

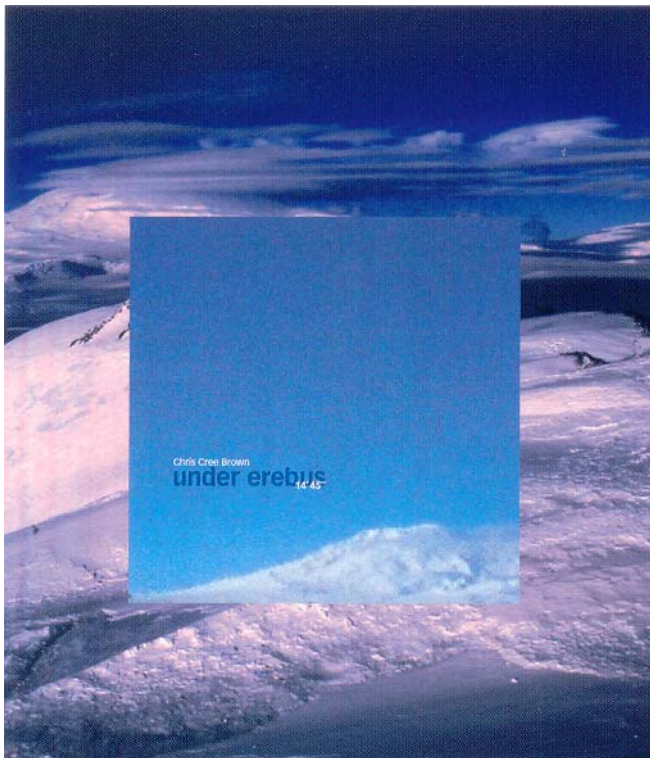
Source: Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu

²³ *Virginia King: sculptor* (David Bateman, 2005), p. 84

Chris Cree Brown – Arts Fellow

Chris Cree Brown (1953-) is a composer and lecturer in music at Canterbury University whose music complemented the Antarctic work of both Virginia King (above) and Bronwyn Judge (below). He describes his trip to Antarctica in 1999 as “one of the highlights of my life”²⁴ and has written of the unique difficulties faced by a sound artist as follows: “The tranquillity of Antarctica is unfamiliar and, as a consequence marginally disturbing, especially when exacerbated by the absence of ambient sound.”²⁵

Icescape, *Silence of the ice* and *Under Erebus* are the works that have been stimulated by his visit. According to critic Ian Dando, describing a performance of *Icescape* by the Christchurch Symphony Orchestra, it “conveyed both the Antarctic’s lonely serenity and its merciless harshness by unleashing chains of gutsy brass dissonances.”²⁶



Under Erebus cover

Source: *Artists Antarctica collection* (Antarctica New Zealand, 2002)

²⁴ Personal communication, 16 December 2010

²⁵ Chris Cree Brown / *Under Erebus* – a composer in Antarctica in *Canzona*, 2003; vol. 24 no. 45, p. 32-34

²⁶ Ian Dando / *CS performs local composer’s Antarctic work* in *Christchurch Star* 25 June 2003, p. B5

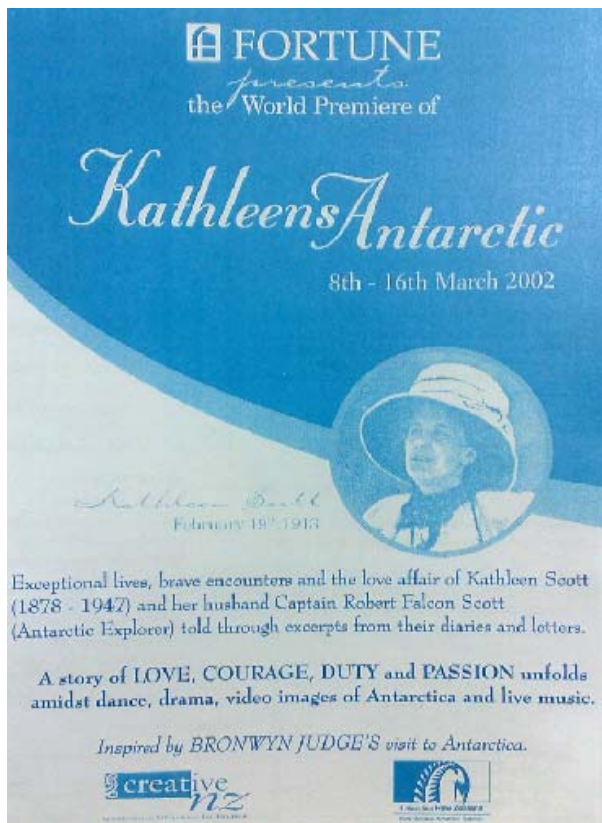
Bronwyn Judge – Arts Fellow

Dunedin born Bronwyn Judge is a dancer, choreographer, film-maker and critic who visited Antarctica in 2000. Like so many Antarctic artists her other passion concerns the natural world: “When she steps out of the studio, it is often into the great outdoors - tramping or rock climbing...”²⁷

She describes one of her post-Antarctic works, *Circulus Antarcticus*, in the following way:

“The light was such in the Antarctic that almost everything became transformed into something visually beautiful. It was so clear and intense. As for things disappearing, because of the silence, weather seemed to quietly come upon you. One minute there was cloud on the horizon and the next mist swirling in a disorientating fog about one so it was difficult to distinguish land from sky. The world disappeared.”²⁸

A second work, *Kathleen’s Antarctic*, explored Antarctica through the eye’s of Captain Scott’s wife.



Kathleen’s Antarctic programme
Source: Antarctica New Zealand

²⁷ DANZnet magazine, February 2004

²⁸ Lisa Walker / *Antarctic Animation: gestures and lines describe a changing environment*, unpublished PhD thesis, University of New South Wales. October 2010

Raewyn Atkinson – Arts Fellow

Raewyn Atkinson was born in 1955. She is a noted ceramic artist who visited Antarctica in 2000, and again, independently, in 2003. Gina Irish has commented: “During both visits, Atkinson documented undisclosed aspects of Antarctica, placing them alongside heroic tales set within vast and empty landscapes. Atkinson reminds us that even from a distance we place Antarctica at risk.”²⁹

She created the exhibition *Homelight* at Christchurch Art Gallery as a result of her visit, an allusion to the Manhire/Orsman/Brown book, and thus in turn to the tins of Homelight brand oil still visible in the historic huts. The exhibition was remarkable for the careful lighting which brought the translucent ceramic objects to life, a reference to the light effects she had experienced in Antarctica: “Atkinson’s memory of blue light filtered through the icy roof of a snow cave she and others dug and slept in while on a two-day field trip, clarified her thoughts for the Homelight series...Press moulding meant she could control thinness and reveal letters...The translucent stack was evocative of light through ice, yet was a response to the human predicaments and poignant narratives involved in this southernmost continent.”³⁰



Homelight exhibition held Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu 13 May -31 July 2005

Source: Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu

²⁹ Gina Irish / *Southbound: artists to Antarctica* in Art New Zealand 117, Summer 2005, p. 42-6

³⁰ Moyra Elliott / *Raewyn Atkinson’s Terranova* in Ceramics: Art and Perception no 54, 2009, p. 30-4

Craig Potton – invited artist

Craig Potton (1952-) is a writer, publisher and photographer. His company, Craig Potton Publishing has a strong list in the field of wildlife, natural history and conservation. He has visited Antarctica twice: firstly in 1993 where he was commissioned to create photographs for calendars and again in the 2000/2001 season once more as a commissioned photographer. He staged the exhibition *Floating on ice* at the Christchurch Art Gallery in December 2006 and his extensive portfolio of Antarctic photography has appeared in titles such as *New Zealand's wilderness heritage*³¹ and *Improbable Eden*³². He is an active advocate of conservation issues.



Craig Potton - *Island 2, Ross Sea*
Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu
Source: Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu

³¹ Les Molloy / *New Zealand's wilderness heritage* (Craig Potton, 2007)

³² Bill Green / *Improbable Eden: the dry valleys of Antarctica* (Craig Potton, 2003)

Denise Copland – Arts Fellow

Denise Copland (1952-) is a Christchurch artist best known for her print-making, much of which deals with themes of nature and conservation. Her post-Antarctic exhibition *A standing place* included prints and three-dimensional objects such as flags, and was dedicated to Sir Ernest Shackleton.

Of this exhibition she has said: “My aim was to try and capture something of the delicate and unfathomable aspects I had experienced in Antarctica; for example, the glowing light, and what lay above and below the surface on which I stood – the shadow signatures within these frames of reference.”³³



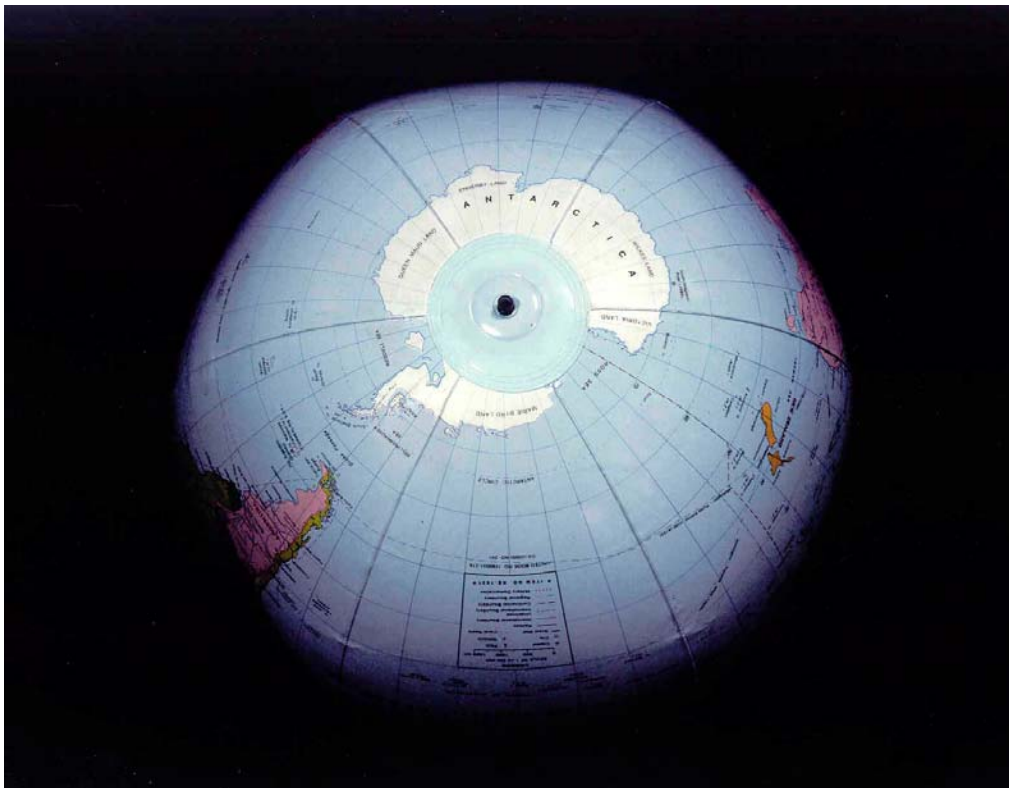
A standing place, exhibition held Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu, 9 April -1 August 2004
Source: Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu

³³ Denise Copland in conversation with Peter Vangioni in Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu Bulletin 137, June-August 2004

Anne Noble – Arts Fellow

Photographer Anne Noble (1954-) is a lecturer at Massey University, Wellington. In a series of Antarctic related exhibitions she has explored the cultural and imaginary associations of Antarctica, rather than its physical appearance. Her Christchurch Art Gallery exhibition *Southern Lights* (December 2005 – July 2006) explored the way that Antarctic photography – and Antarctica itself – is commercially exploited. It included postcards that were both exhibition objects and objects for sale, and Antarctica-shaped jigsaw puzzles and biscuits.

She has visited Antarctica several times: under the New Zealand programme, under a National Science Foundation programme, and as an independent visitor to the Antarctic peninsula. Curator Peter Vangioni has commented: “Although markedly different to her first expedition, both trips allowed her to focus on how an idea of place can be constructed through photographic images.”³⁴



Anne Noble – *White lantern*

Collection Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu

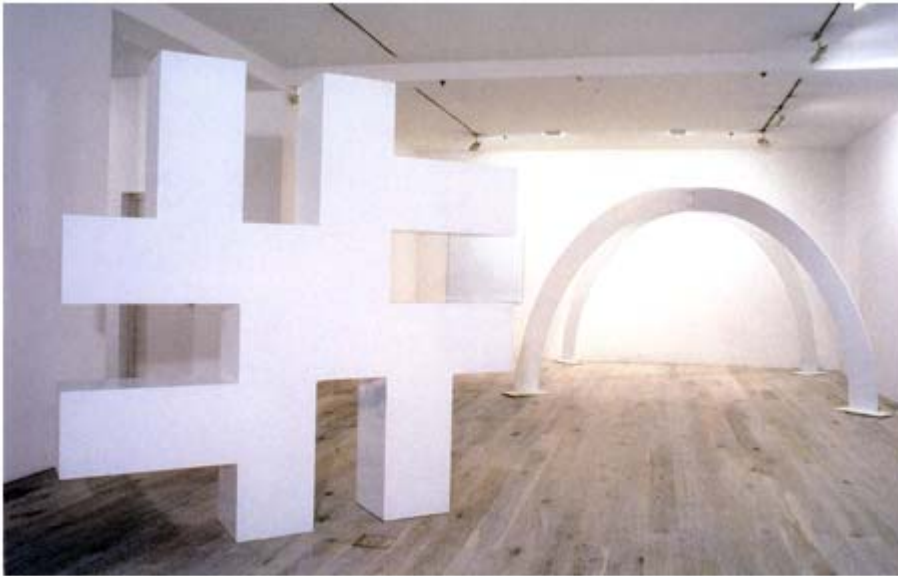
Source: Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu

³⁴ Peter Vangioni / *Anne Noble – Southern Lights* in Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu Bulletin 143, December 2005, p. 28

Richard Thompson – Arts Fellow

Richard Thompson was born in Auckland in 1965 and is well-known as both a painter and sculptor. His 2001 visit to Antarctica caused a decided shift in his painting with the use of an increasingly muted palette of colours.

In reviewing his 2002 exhibition *Antarctica* at the Gow Langsford gallery in Auckland, critic T J McNamara wrote: "...do not expect explorers' huts or penguins. There is only the white of ice and the cool pale sea and light of snow."³⁵



Antarctica, exhibition held Gow Langsford Gallery, Auckland, 19 June – 13 July 2002

Source: Gow Langsford Gallery

³⁵ New Zealand Herald, 24 June 2002

Fieke Neuman – Arts Fellow

Fieke Neuman (1960-) trained as a scientist and she currently works at Otago University where she develops undergraduate laboratory classes and coordinates undergraduate teaching support. She was formerly the curator of the Otago Medical School's Museum of Anatomy. However she is as well known for her work as a fabric artist and clothes designer and it is in this capacity that she visited Antarctica in 2002.

On her return, Neuman said: "I had chosen to represent the scientific aspects of Antarctic life in a fashion collection because of my scientific background. I also wanted to get across the beauty and value of science."³⁶

Antarctica New Zealand has a collection of her dresses inspired by her visit, which she has described as "One of my life's highlights."³⁷ ANZ collection curator Ursula Ryan says that Neuman's dresses are among the most frequently loaned and exhibited items in the collection.³⁸



Fieke Neuman KØ57 (Fish Dress) Collection of Antarctica New Zealand
Source: Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu

³⁶ Jude Hathaway / *Inspired by icy journey* in Otago Daily Times 14 December 2002, p. B3

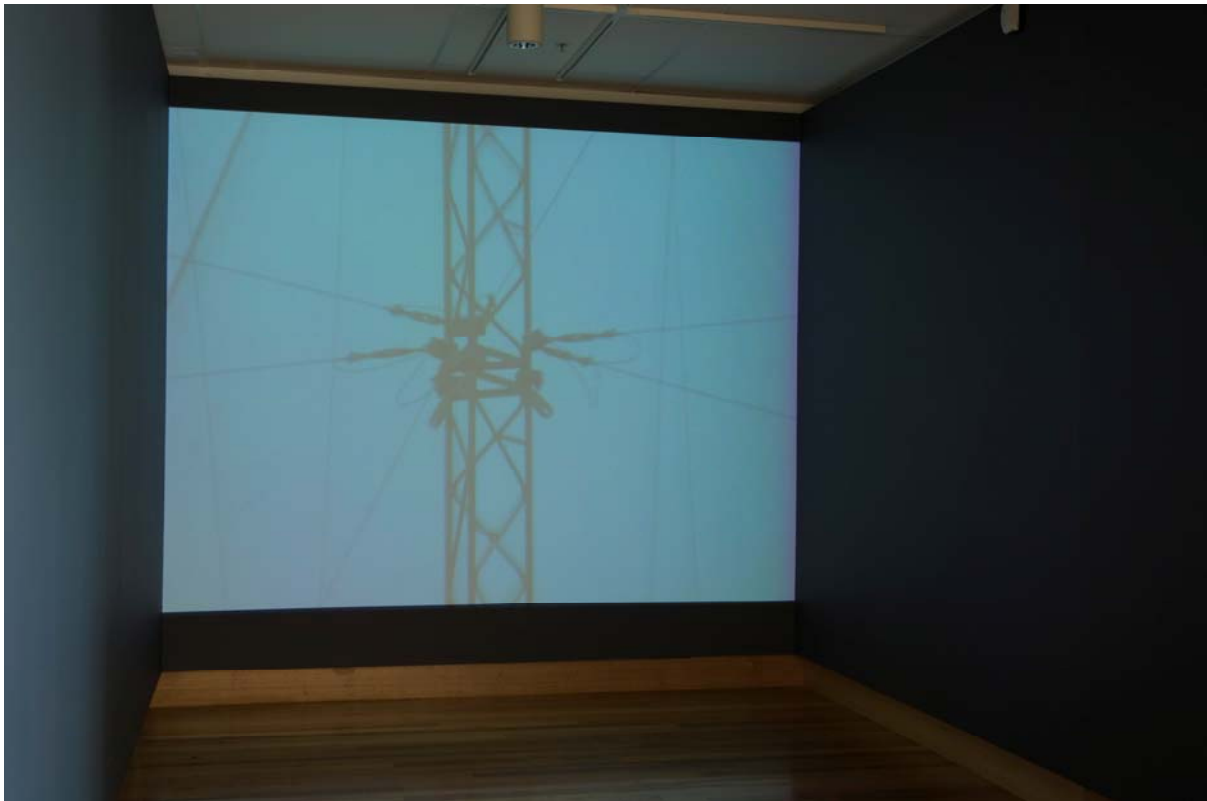
³⁷ Personal communication, 19 December 2010

³⁸ Personal communication, 14 February 2011

Phil Dadson – Arts Fellow

Phil Dadson is a musician, sculptor, film-maker and sound artist. He was born in 1946. Between 1974 and 2002 his highly original performance group *From Scratch* performed regularly to critical acclaim. His 2007 Antarctic show *Aerial Farm* incorporated film of Scott Base aerials with a mesmerising soundtrack of the wind's effect on steel cables.

Dadson has stated that the visit to Antarctica: "...provided a heightened sense of urgency about the politics of impermanence...One memory I regularly return to is the physical sensation of feeling an absolute miniscule, remote and insignificant dot on the surface of the planet."³⁹



Aerial Farm exhibition held Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu, 10 August – 14 October 2007
Source: Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu

³⁹ Patrick Shepherd / *Antarctica – a cold, quiet place* in *Canzona*, 2006, vol. 26 no. 48, p. 102-105

Grahame Sydney – invited artist

Grahame Sydney was born in 1948 and is one of New Zealand's best known painters and photographers. He has made the depiction of the landscape of North Otago uniquely his own. He visited Antarctica in 2003 and again in 2006. Although known primarily as a painter, "frustrated by attempts to paint in conditions where the brush hardened and exposed fingers threatened frost-bite within seconds, he turned again to the camera."⁴⁰ These photographs have been exhibited widely and published in book form as *White Silence*.



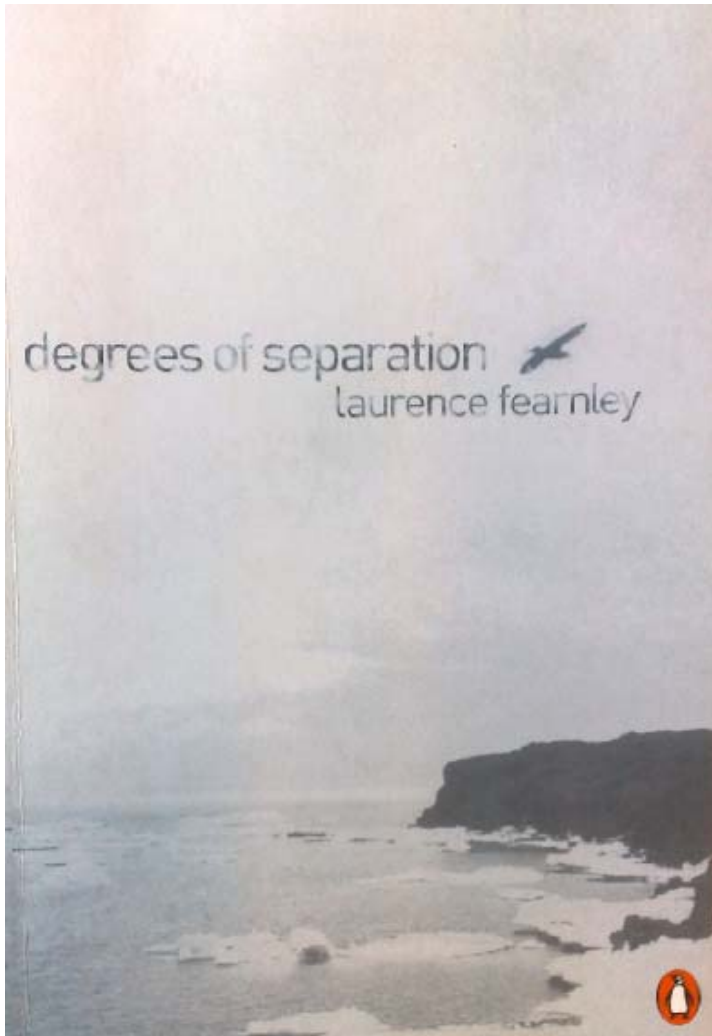
Photographs of Antarctica exhibition held Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu, 19 October - 2 December 2007

Source: Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu

⁴⁰ *White silence: Graeme Sydney's Antarctica* (Viking, 2008)

Laurence Fearnley – Arts Fellow

Laurence Fearnley (1963-) is a novelist and writer of short-stories. Her visit to Antarctica resulted in the novel *Degrees of separation*⁴¹ a book which deliberately ignores Antarctica's heroic past and its literary heritage of epic adventure stories. Its scale is instead very much more human. Reviewer Denis Welch wrote: "*Degrees of separation* will stay with me...because of its skilful plotting, its insight into character, its subtle, ironic style and, of course, its remarkable setting – Antarctica."⁴²



Degrees of separation book cover

⁴¹ Laurence Fearnley / *Degrees of separation* (Penguin, 2006)

⁴² Denis Welch / *Whiteout: a hypnotic novel about Antarctica*, in *New Zealand Listener*, 15 April 2006, p. 42

Patrick Shepherd – Honorary Arts Fellow

Patrick Shepherd (1963-) is a music educator, composer, conductor and critic. His visit to Antarctica in 2004 has become a major centre of his current research and composition activities. His orchestral composition *Cryosphere* was a finalist for the 2007 Douglas Lilburn prize.

cryosphere Patrick Shepherd

© 2006 Patrick Shepherd: cryosphere

Cryosphere opening page

Source: SOUNZ Centre for New Zealand Music

Andris Apse – Honorary Arts Fellow

Andris Apse (1943-) is a distinguished photographer, with many books of wildlife, travel and natural history photography to his credit. He was commissioned to travel to Antarctica in 2004 as an invited guest but was designated an Honorary Arts Fellow when invited to exhibit work alongside other Arts Fellows. Some of his Antarctic photography has appeared in his illustrated biography.⁴³



Andris Apse - *Ice formations at Lake Brownworth, Dry Valleys, Antarctica*
Source: <http://www.andrisapse.com>

⁴³ Ron Crosby / *Odyssey and images : an illustrated biography* (Reed, 2006)

David Trubridge – Arts Fellow

David Trubridge (1951-) is a designer and furniture maker with a passionate commitment to principles of sustainability. He says of his visit to Antarctica in 2004: "... the place had a far more profound effect on me than I had expected. On my return I found it impossible to reduce all that I had seen and felt into mere objects. I discovered a new way of seeing landscape and came to see that for design to play the vital role it must in changing our damaging lifestyle patterns, it had to free itself from its focus on the object itself, and its complicit encouragement of consumption. Instead design must be about process, about the ways we do things and how to do them better, not about the things themselves."⁴⁴

He contributed an essay on sustainable design to the book *Carbon neutral by 2020 : how New Zealanders can tackle climate change* published in 2007 by Craig Potton.



Source: <http://www.davidtrubridge.com/antarctica-and-design/>



⁴⁴ <http://www.davidtrubridge.com/antarctica-and-design/> viewed 28 January 2011

Kirsten Haydon – Arts Fellow

Kirsten Haydon (1973-) is a jeweller whose visit to Antarctica in 2004 resulted in the exhibition *Room with a view* a powerful collection of small, exquisitely crafted objects inspired by Antarctic landforms.

In describing this exhibition, she stated: “Jewellery, historically, is a personal and sentimental medium. Many objects were fashioned in the form of miniature representations of landscapes and icons and have been used to remind people of journeys and experiences.”⁴⁵

She completed a PhD on the interpretation of the Antarctic landscape in 2008.⁴⁶



Room with a view exhibition held Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu, 11 August – 3 December 2006
Source: Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu

⁴⁵ Jennifer Hay / *Room with a view* by Kirsten Haydon in Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu Bulletin 145 June – August 2006, p. 28

⁴⁶ Kirsten Haydon / *Antarctic landscapes in the souvenir and jewellery* (RMIT, 2008)

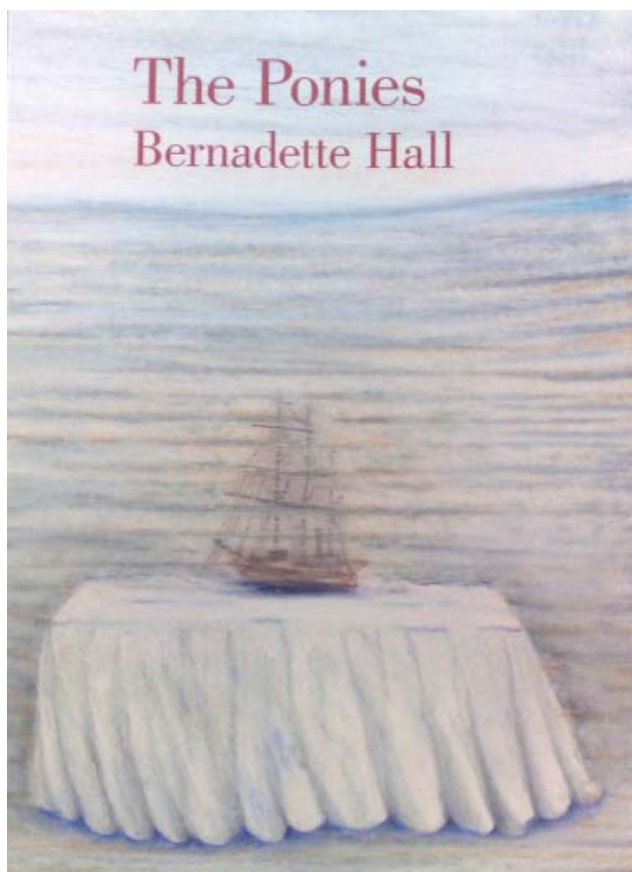
Bernadette Hall – Arts Fellow

Bernadette Hall (1945-) is a playwright and poet, whose work has been described as “characterised by a crisp, often cryptic, lyricism, combined with a visionary intensity.”⁴⁷

She visited Antarctica with her good friend Kathryn Madill in 2004, the two having submitted a joint proposal. Madill’s painting illustrates Hall’s book of Antarctic poetry, *The ponies*⁴⁸ for which she also designed the cover.

Reviewer James Norcliffe said of this collection: “The danger in trying to write wide-eyed from a strange and exotic landscape is that your poems, your bulletins, will turn out to be postcards. Hall is far too consummate a poet to allow this to happen...the poems here are wonderfully strange and strangely wonderful.”⁴⁹

Bernadette Hall and Kathryn Madill’s original proposal – a collaborative illustrated story book for adults – has been completed but remains unpublished.⁵⁰



The Ponies book cover

⁴⁷ *The Oxford Companion to New Zealand Literature*, edited by Roger Robinson and Nelson Wattie (1998)

⁴⁸ Bernadette Hall / *The ponies* (Victoria University Press, 2007)

⁴⁹ James Norcliffe / *The ponies by Bernadette Hall* in *Takahe* 60, p. 62

⁵⁰ Personal communication, 16 December 2010

Kathryn Madill – Arts Fellow

Kathryn Madill is a painter and printmaker, born in 1951. Curator Belinda Jones has written that “looking at a Kathryn Madill painting is like stepping into another world, stepping through the membrane of the conscious and concrete into the jabberwocky of dreams, childhood, memory, songs, stories, riddles and rhymes.”⁵¹ Her vision is “other-worldly, elfin, whimsical and visionary.”⁵²

In 2004 she travelled to Antarctica with Bernadette Hall, the two having submitted a joint proposal. The title of her post-Antarctic exhibition *On the white ice table* was taken from Hall’s poem *Fissure*.

Kathryn Madill and Bernadette Hall’s original proposal – a collaborative illustrated story book for adults – has been completed but remains unpublished.⁵³



On the white ice table, exhibition held City Art Christchurch 15 November – 9 December 2005
Source: Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu

⁵¹ Belinda Jones / *Through the looking glass: Kathryn Madill* (Forrester Gallery Oamaru, 1999)

⁵² Warwick Brown / *Another 100 New Zealand artists* (Godwit, 1996)

⁵³ Personal communication, 16 December 2010

Dick Frizzell – invited artist

Dick Frizzell (1943-) is one of New Zealand's best known painters. His background as a commercial artist has to some extent dogged him, but at the same time has given even his most serious art an enviable popular appeal. In his autobiography he states that his Antarctic mission was to “track down the signage evidence of how people personalise their spaces – and I found plenty of it.”⁵⁴



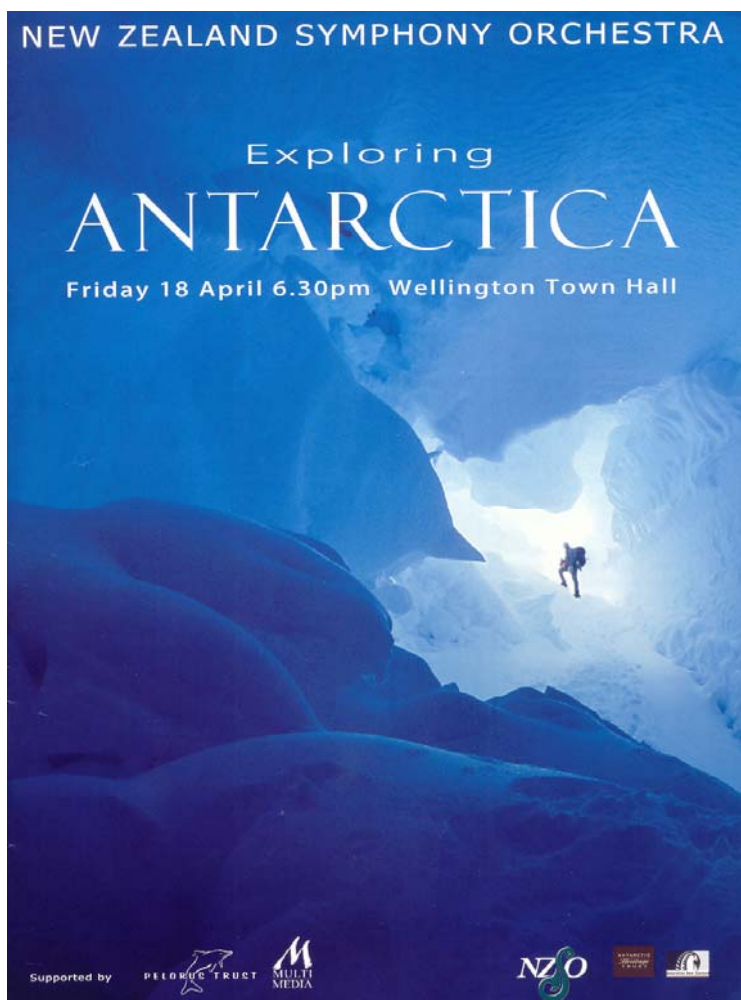
Dick Frizzell – *Hut interior*

Source: Gow Langsford Gallery, Auckland

⁵⁴ *Dick Frizzell the painter* (Godwit, 2009)

Gareth Farr – Arts Fellow

Gareth Farr (1968-) is a percussionist and composer who has enjoyed remarkable success with commissions for new works from many New Zealand orchestras. Powerfully stated rhythms and extensive use of percussion characterise his work. *Terra Incognita*, a piece for bass, choir and orchestra was premiered in 2008. It was described by one reviewer as “vastly superior” [to Peter Maxwell Davies’s *Antarctic Symphony*], with “...an awesome sense of grandeur and mystery.”⁵⁵ The settings of Tennyson’s poems and of excerpts from Captain Scott’s diaries were described as “wonderfully evocative.”⁵⁶



Exploring Antarctica concert programme

Source: New Zealand Symphony Orchestra

⁵⁵ John Button / *Chilly mix of sounds and pictures* in Dominion Post, 21 April 2008, p. 6

⁵⁶ Ibid.

Megan Jenkinson – Arts Fellow

Megan Jenkinson (1958-) is a photographer and lectures in photography at the University of Auckland. She has created several Antarctic exhibitions, including *Fossil Cairn*, using photographs of the rocks found with Scott's party which are now in the Natural History Museum in London. The significance of these is that it has been argued that Scott's decision not to discard them may have contributed to the expedition's catastrophic end.

Fantastic coloured photographs formed a series of later exhibitions, culminating in the exhibition *Light Horizon* at Two Rooms Gallery Auckland in 2008. Of this show Virginia Were said: "Jenkinson's photographic montages are brilliant evocations of ...atmospheric phenomena, visual tricks conjured from the imagination of this acclaimed artist."⁵⁷⁵⁸

She further commented: "Looking at these images it is easy to see why Jenkinson has described them as 'a post-romantic view of our engagement with nature', meditating on the temporal nature of existence brought home to her during her visit to Antarctica."



Fossil cairn: the weight of destiny, exhibition held Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu, 7 December 2007 – 16 March 2008
Source: Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu

⁵⁷ Virginia Were / *Volatile imaginings* in Art News New Zealand, Winter 2008, p. 72

⁵⁸ Ibid.

Clare Plug – Arts Fellow

Clare Plug was born on 29 May 1953; her middle name is Hilary⁵⁹. She is another artist who combines an active art practice with a background in science – in her case a degree in zoology. She has worked extensively with the discharge dyed process, whereby colour is removed from usually black fabric using household bleach. Pattern and texture is then applied in embroidery. When she visited Antarctica in 2006 she drew inspiration from both real fabric that she saw there, such as flags, and from historical evidence of fabric, such as the banners and pennants seen in the well known photograph of Scott's mid-winter Christmas party by Herbert Ponting.



Herbert Ponting - Captain Scott's birthday dinner at Cape Evans, June 6th 1911 Clare Plug – *ASPA 136 – Erebus voices* (detail)
Source: Douglas Lloyd Jenkins / *Clare Plug: look South* (Hawkes Bay Museum and Art Gallery, 2009)

Her exhibition *Look South*, held at her local museum and art gallery in Napier was very well received: “Plug’s *Look South* is an impressive body of work that manages to look both back and forwards – an artist’s response to history, landscape and scientific endeavour, as well as the personal triumphs and losses Antarctica exacts.”⁶⁰

In the accompanying book, the exhibition’s curator, Douglas Lloyd-Jenkins, declared Plug “a self-appointed art recycler of the very stuff of Antarctic history.”⁶¹

⁵⁹ Ann Packer / *Stitch – contemporary New Zealand textile artists* (Random House, 2006) p. 168

⁶⁰ Ann Packer / *Unpicking the fabric of the Pole* in *New Zealand Listener*, September 12-18 2009

⁶¹ Douglas Lloyd Jenkins / *Black speck ahead*, catalogue essay in *Look South*, Hawkes Bay Art Gallery and Museum, 2009.

Joyce Campbell – Arts Fellow

Joyce Campbell (1971-) is best known as a photographer but also works in sculpture, film and video installation. She divides her time between Los Angeles and New Zealand where she teaches at Auckland University. She has deliberately embraced antiquated photographic techniques, such as the ambrotype and the daguerrotype, to superb effect. Environmental issues are a major concern.

Says critic Sophie Jerram: “Campbell uses a Victorian Gothic aesthetic to exploit our fears that nature may indeed have some grand plan – that is, to shake us off the planet now that we have proved ourselves unworthy of it.”⁶²

Campbell herself has said: “[Antarctica] is extraordinarily picturesque, its epic grandeur is the stuff of calendars and it has been photographed to death. Like any idealised subject, we know it both too well and not at all. Something savage, atavistic and genuinely terrifying lies behind that idealised landscape.”⁶³



Joyce Campbell – *Last light*

Source: Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu

⁶² Sophie Jerram / *Claims on beauty* in *New Zealand Journal of Photography* 65, 2007, p. 10

⁶³ *Ibid.*

Neil Dawson – invited artist

Neil Dawson (1948) is a sculptor of international repute whose public sculptures can be found in cities across New Zealand and around the world. Among his best known are *Ferns* in Wellington's Civic Square and *Chalice* in Cathedral Square, Christchurch.

His exhibition *Thoughts on ice* at Janne Land Gallery in 2006 represented his ideas once he knew he would be visiting Antarctica but before he had actually done so. In August 2010 pre- and post-Antarctic work was included in his exhibition *Five years* at Milford Galleries, Queenstown.



Thoughts on Ice – spiral

Source: Milford Galleries, Queenstown

Ronnie van Hout – Arts Fellow

Ronnie van Hout (1962-) is a New Zealand multi-media artist whose work is invariably off-beat, witty and unpredictable. The artist's own place in an indifferent world is a recurring theme, with images of his own face or models of himself in various usually unhappy situations making regular appearances. The Antarctic elements in his show *Who goes there?* were impressively quirky. Heroic adventure and Antarctica's sublime landscape were nowhere to be seen. Instead, in three videos he "focussed on the hyper-mundane life inside Scott Base and into this footage he spliced bits and pieces from the John Carpenter horror movie called *The Thing*...insinuating that something more may be going on amongst the everyday duties of the base."⁶⁴ Meanwhile in a Scott Base green cubicle sat a glum mannequin of the artist.



Who goes there? Exhibition held Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu, 4 July – 18 October 2009

Source: Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu

⁶⁴ Justin Paton, curator of *Who goes there?* Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu exhibition audio tour

Tessa Duder – Arts Fellow

Swimmer, musician, sailor, novelist and playwright, Tessa Duder (1940-) is one of New Zealand's best known literary figures. She has written plays, poetry, novels and essays for adults and children. In 2005 she wrote a biography of Margaret Mahy⁶⁵ and in 2009 she edited the definitive collection of her verse.⁶⁶

She has stated that: "Slowly...a body of Antarctic literature for young people is being established. It's quite a challenge, to add something worthy, and it's my task for 2008."⁶⁷

At the time of writing she is working on an Antarctic novel which she expects to finish in mid-2011 and to be published in March 2012.⁶⁸ Its genre is one she has never tackled before and Duder explicitly attributes the courage necessary to do this to her time in Antarctica.⁶⁹



Tessa Duder at Scott Base

Source: http://www.tessaduder.com/res_artists.html

⁶⁵ Tessa Duder / *Margaret Mahy: a writer's life* (HarperCollins, 2005)

⁶⁶ Tessa Duder / *The Word Witch – the Magical Verse of Margaret Mahy*, (HarperCollins, 2009.)

⁶⁷ <http://www.tessaduder.com/bio.html> viewed 27 January 2011

⁶⁸ Personal communication, 25 January 2011

⁶⁹ Ibid

John Walsh – invited artist

John Walsh was born in Tolaga Bay in 1954. He associates himself with the Te Aitanga a Hauiti people of Ngati Porou and retains strong East Coast links. His work regularly explores the complex relationship between Maori and Pakeha. He held an exhibition of Antarctic inspired paintings called *Thoughts on Antarctica* at Wellington's Janne Land Gallery in 2008

“Walsh has been an artist to watch. His distinctive style conveys an enjoyment of humour, a reverence for the past and a haunting sense of connection that, while keenly Maori, somehow transcends its source and captures the universal.”⁷⁰



The forgotten Goddess from the exhibition *Thoughts on Antarctica*, Janne Land Gallery, 16 September – 11 October 2008

⁷⁰ Elizabeth Caughey and John Gow / *Contemporary New Zealand art 4* (David Bateman, 2005)

Boyd Webb – invited artist

Boyd Webb (1947-) was born and educated in New Zealand and is now based in the United Kingdom. He has earned a reputation as one of New Zealand's most outstanding art photographers. He was the subject of a major exhibition that toured New Zealand in 1997. The curator of this exhibition, Jenny Harper, has written: "Serendipitous and questioning, puzzling and perverse, Boyd Webb's photographs move between illusory construction and two-dimensional fact."⁷¹

On learning of his trip to Antarctica he said: "Almost in the same order as a trip to the moon. Ice, weather, scientists and penguins – a heady mix of great portent set in the last great wilderness – what could be more inspiring?"⁷²

The illustration below dates from 1984 and is in the collection of the Tate Gallery, London who describe it as follows: "Webb intended when first planning this to make a work about Captain Scott, the Antarctic explorer who died in 1912. Memorials and mementoes of Scott abound in Christchurch, New Zealand, where Webb was born and went to school, and these came to seem to him ironic, since the expedition had been unsuccessful."⁷³



Boyd Webb – *Scott's tent* Tate Gallery, London

Source: Tate Gallery

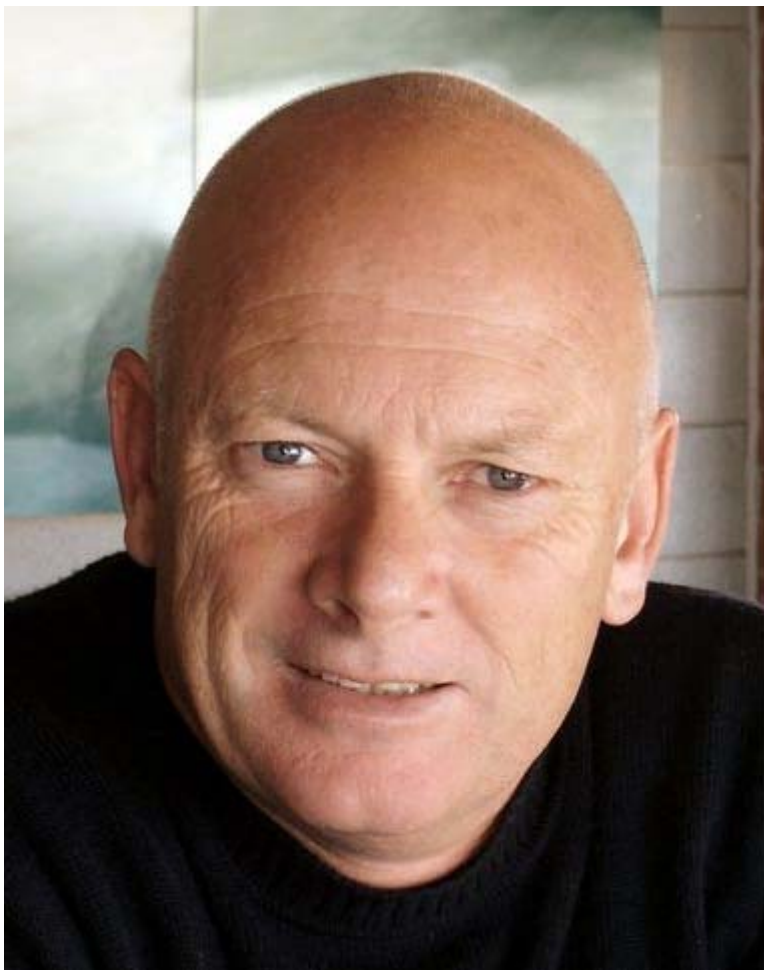
⁷¹ Jenny Harper / *Boyd Webb* (Auckland Art Gallery and Museums Aotearoa, 1997)

⁷² *Antarctica New Zealand announces invited artists* in *Icesheet* 34, June 2008

⁷³ *The Tate Gallery 1984-86: Illustrated Catalogue of Acquisitions Including Supplement to Catalogue of Acquisitions 1982-84*, Tate Gallery 1988, p. 289-90

Lloyd Jones – invited artist

Lloyd Jones (1955-) is an established writer of fiction and non fiction which has been widely acclaimed. He achieved international best-seller status when his 2007 novel *Mr Pip* was shortlisted for the Man Booker prize and won the Commonwealth Writer's prize. He was born in Lower Hutt which has been the setting for much of his work, though unusual settings (Albania, Bougainville, Tunisia, Buenos Aires...) have also featured. Roger Robinson states that Jones "is a fiction writer drawn to a sympathetic portrayal of ordinary middle-class life, a suburban realist who simultaneously challenges realism, subverts fictional norms, defies categories and writes narratives which are challenging, original and in some cases controversial."⁷⁴



Lloyd Jones

Source: Banff-Calgary International Writers' Festival, 2007, http://www.wordfest.com/07/media_press.php

⁷⁴ *The Oxford Companion to New Zealand Literature*, edited by Roger Robinson and Nelson Wattie (1998).

Jane Ussher

Photographer Jane Ussher (1953-) visited Antarctica during the 2008/2009 summer at the request of the Antarctic Heritage Trust, guardians of the Ross Sea region's historic huts. She visited as part of Antarctica New Zealand's media programme but her name must appear on any credible list of Antarctic artists.

The book⁷⁵ that resulted from her visit contains a remarkable series of photographs of close-ups of wood, leather, hessian, fur, rust, rope, claw and hair, where texture and tone is all important. The occasional long-shots of ice and snow are inserted as if just to remind the reader of where these huts actually are. The palette is overwhelmingly brown and grey.

Executive Director of the New Zealand section of the Trust, Nigel Watson says: "The Trust wants to shed light on this remarkable legacy and engage with people who will never have the privilege of visiting the buildings. The opportunity to collaborate with Jane Ussher to photograph the buildings in detail was one way to highlight these places."⁷⁶



Jane Ussher, *Men's shaving brush*⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Jane Ussher / *Still life: inside the historic huts of Scott and Shackleton* (Murdoch Books, 2010)

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 13

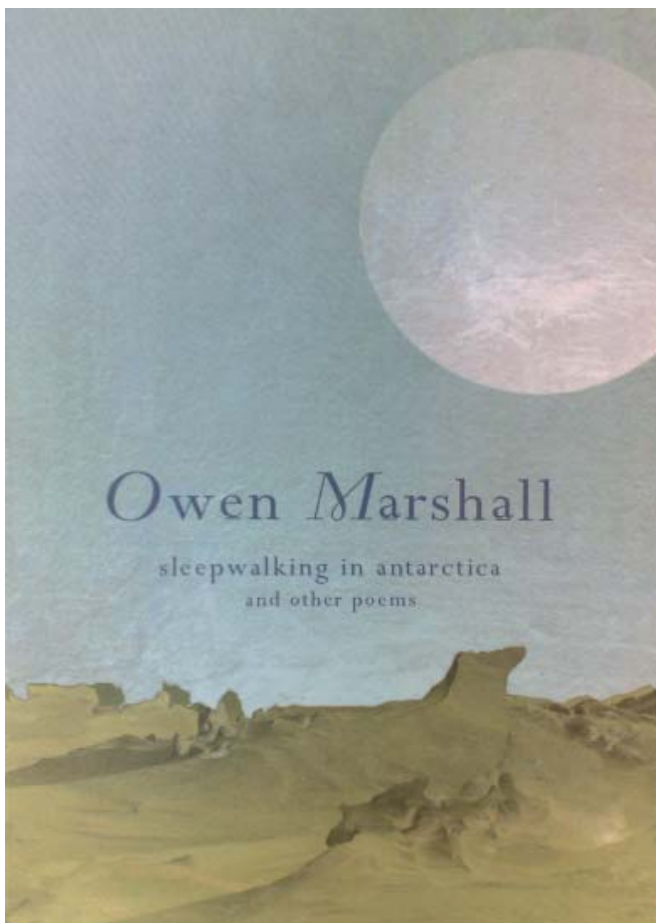
⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 153

Owen Marshall – invited artist

Owen Marshall (1941-) is a poet, novelist and writer of short stories. His short stories in particular have placed him in the forefront of contemporary New Zealand writers; Frank Sargeson's heir as Michael King has suggested.⁷⁸

Critic Sarah Quigley has said that: "His writing is down-to-earth without being earthy, full of sentiment but never sentimental. Basically, he achieves what every writer wants and not many manage: perfect balance."⁷⁹

In 2010 Canterbury University published his collection of poetry *Sleepwalking in Antarctica* which contains verse inspired by his 2009 visit. Writing in the *Otago Daily Times*, Hamesh Wyatt said of this book: "His poetry is bright, confident and compelling. *Sleepwalking* is a fascinating pleasure. This time around, Marshall sizzles."⁸⁰



Sleepwalking in Antarctica cover
Source: Christchurch City Libraries

⁷⁸ Michael King / *Simply the best* in Metro, June 1982

⁷⁹ Sarah Quigley / *The breathtaking precision and grace of Owen Marshall* in The Press Saturday 17 January 1998

⁸⁰ Hamesh Wyatt / *Poetry* in Otago Daily Times, 8 May 2010, p. 49

Peter James Smith – invited artist

New Zealand born Peter James Smith (1954-) recently retired as Professor of art and mathematics and head of the school of creative media at RMIT University, Melbourne. His art has repeatedly investigated the links between creative work and scientific method. Patterns, statistics, tables of columns, graphs and formulas have all appeared in and around paintings.

He described his 2003 series *Fading Light* as: "... a critique of reason and rational argument, citing fragments of scientific history and discovery. Rational mathematical proofs float in a non-rational way amongst the cinematic images of romantic realism."⁸¹

His habit of seeing art from a scientific point of view and science as a creative process has strengthened his perception of both and taken him towards a remarkable unified theory of human endeavour.



Truth and

beauty exhibition held at Gippsland Art Gallery 5 April - 4 May 2008

Source: <http://www.peterjamesmith.net/>

⁸¹ Peter James Smith / *Fading light* (Gallery 101 Melbourne, 2003)

Laurence Aberhart – invited artist

Laurence Aberhart (1949-) is one of New Zealand's most eminent photographers and he was the subject of a major retrospective exhibition that toured New Zealand during 2007 and 2008. He too has embraced archaic photographic equipment with great effect.

His work is very wide-ranging but photographs of man-made buildings and objects form the bulk of his output. He has regularly explored interiors, windows and the idea of looking into particular places and scenes. Many, but by no means all, of his images are famously empty of people: deserted streetscapes, decaying buildings, graveyards, memorials, museum exhibits.

All of which means that his response to Antarctica is keenly awaited. Aberhart expected working in Antarctica would be difficult but on his return has described the trip very positively: "I've processed the negatives and there is enough there to satisfy [Antarctica New Zealand] and me."⁸²



Laurence Aberhart, exhibition held at Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu, 18 July - 12 October 2008

⁸² Personal communication, 25 January 2011

Joe Sheehan – invited artist

Joe Sheehan (1976-) is a sculptor who represents something of a new generation of New Zealand Antarctic artists. He trained as a jeweller and then worked as a commercial greenstone carver. However at his 2005 show *Limelight* at Objectspace Gallery in Auckland he turned the usual tourist carving on its head by creating greenstone light bulbs, pens and cassette tapes. "Sheehan asks some hard questions. He asks why much contemporary greenstone carving looks like works held in museums and not like objects of this time," says critic Sue Gardiner.⁸³

Looking forward to his trip to Antarctica, Sheehan made these observations:

"What does a maker do? Perhaps some subzero whittling? Maybe some Ice pictures? You can't take anything away. So the image makers have an advantage which is possibly a disadvantage...if the attempt at representation is futile then a picture won't cut it, and what's a thousand words when words fail? I expect to be blown away - nothing less. And this mess of thinking will settle and something will come out of it who knows when. It's a chance to get loose and I can't wait."⁸⁴



Joe Sheehan

Source: http://thearts.co.nz/artist_page.php&aid=84

⁸³ Sue Gardiner / *Auckland postcards* in *Art News*, Summer 2005, p. 26

⁸⁴ Personal communication, 11 November 2010

Dave Dobbyn – invited artist

Dave Dobbyn is New Zealand's best known popular musician and song-writer. His song *Loyal* has topped various lists and polls as the country's favourite popular song. He was born in Auckland in 1957 and performed in bands while still at school. He formed Th' Dudes in 1977 and DD Smash in 1981. He has since worked as a solo artist, composer, songwriter and arranger. Of all the artists who have visited Antarctica, his public profile is without a doubt the highest.

In an interview covering his visit to Antarctica he has said: "It's a freezing place but I have been incredibly comfortable and to be walking out in it and to stand out and listen to the silence when the wind is down - I've never known silence like it - and I've never known a roar like Condition 2. The sheer power of it has just been overwhelming".⁸⁵

When asked whether he was considering composing a song or something more abstract as a response to his visit to Antarctica, he replied: "Yes abstract sounds good. And it should be because it is wordless. I think I might pick up the odd conversation or the odd little piece that I've recorded and then use that as a basis - and put it through the grinder in the studio and then see what ambient stuff I can come up with."⁸⁶



Dave Dobbyn performing at Auckland Zoo, 21 January 2011

Source: <http://www.davedobbyn.co.nz/>

⁸⁵ Dave Dobbyn interviewed by Alison Ballance in *the Arts on Sunday*, broadcast on Radio New Zealand, 30 January 2011.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

Part two – the programmes

The programmes that have resulted in sending New Zealand artists to Antarctica fall broadly into three periods:

- Artists visiting Antarctica as a result of *ad hoc* invitations
- Artists visiting Antarctica in partnership with Creative New Zealand
- Artists visiting Antarctica at the invitation of ANZ, with advice from a panel of experts

First period – ad hoc invitations

Between 1957 and 1996 artists visited Antarctica *ad hoc*, in response to particular initiatives and arbitrary invitations. There were long gaps between visits and there appears to have been no particular strategy in place. Peter McIntyre and Austen Deans describe chance meetings that enabled them to visit, while Maurice Conly's position in the RNZAF – he retained the rank of Wing Commander – facilitated his two visits. All these early period artists were painters and they all painted in a broadly traditional, realist style that was popular and easily understood. The job in hand was to record Antarctica's landscape, buildings, people and equipment – placing the artists in the direct line of descent from the artists of the heroic era, such as Edward Wilson, and thence back even to the artists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, such as William Hodges. In every case an illustrated documentary record was required.

Photographer Kim Westerskov's position as both scientist and photographer places him in a unique category, but it should be noted that his work was also strictly documentary.

The brief of all these artists was very similar to that of the official war artist: to paint pictures that were easy to understand and which told the story of what was going on in the theatres to which they were assigned. What was required from the artists' visit to Antarctica was the raising of the public profile of New Zealand's Antarctic programme and this has remained the case. Established artists, with a track record in this kind of commissioned work, were selected as and when required; and the fact that many had a military background is not surprising.

Examples of the work created were usually, but not always, retained by the New Zealand Antarctic programme: the current Antarctica New Zealand collection lacks for example any work by Peter McIntyre.

Second period – the Creative New Zealand years

The second period ran from 1997 to 2007 when sending artists to Antarctica became a regular, systematic activity, with the financial support of Creative New Zealand (CNZ). These artists are described as Arts Fellows and are so designated in the listing that forms the first part of this report. During this period, other artists were still specifically invited, travelling to Antarctica outside the CNZ scheme to undertake specific commissions, much like the artists in the earlier period.

The trigger for this change, which led directly to a veritable flood of visiting artists, from New Zealand and other countries with permanent bases, was the twentieth meeting of the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting, held in Utrecht between 29 April and 10 May 1996. Resolution 2, passed at this meeting, states

The Representatives,

Noting that Antarctica has been the subject of significant works of art, literature and music; recognising that the unique character of Antarctica itself represents an inspiration for protecting its values;

Recommend:

Promotion of understanding and appreciation of the values of Antarctica, in particular its scientific, aesthetic and wilderness values, including through:

- a) Educational opportunities, in particular for young persons, and*
- b) The contribution of writers, artists and musicians.*

This coincided with the establishment on 1 July 1996 of Antarctica New Zealand as a distinct Government entity responsible for developing, managing and executing all New Zealand activity in Antarctica.

Since this date the national Antarctic programmes of many countries have sent artists to Antarctica for similar reasons: to raise the profile of the programmes and to allow the continent to be seen through eyes other than those of scientists. The following countries have at some stage sent artists, some as part of a regular programme, some irregularly, to Antarctica.

- Argentina
- Australia
- Chile
- France
- Germany
- Great Britain
- New Zealand
- United States
- Sweden

It is beyond the scope of this report to consider the outcomes of all these visiting artist programmes and the extent to which national art practices, traditions and cultural values are reflected, replicated, continued, exaggerated, or indeed denied in Antarctica.

Instrumental in setting up these new arrangements was Antarctica New Zealand employee Tim Higham who wrote at the time: "Antarctica is more than just a place for science. It has as much value as a mental construct, a geography for our imagination: last wilderness, world park, global barometer, heroic graveyard".⁸⁷

With the benefit of many years' hindsight, Higham reflects that the fact that Antarctica New Zealand was a newly formed entity "enabled us to re-examine a lot of the rationale and expression of New Zealand's presence in Antarctica. My main inspiration was the US Antarctic Program's *Artists and Writers Program*, managed by Guy Guthridge. It had involved people like Kim Stanley Robinson and Barry Lopez. I sought Guy's advice on setting up the New Zealand programme. It was definitely the right idea at the right time."⁸⁸

The first two artists to be sent in this new atmosphere were Chris Orsman and Nigel Brown, accompanied by invited artist Bill Manhire, and a film crew. The composition of this trio indicates at once the radical break that 1996 represents: an astringent, political painter in his 40s and two professional writers most likely to respond to Antarctica in verse. Although CNZ would soon become involved, these three artists received no cash payment, though the cost of sending them was calculated at over \$10,000 each. The inclusion of a film crew is a further indication of the kind of exposure that the fledgling Antarctica New Zealand was looking for from this investment. Tim Higham also recalls an extended article in the *New Zealand Herald*⁸⁹ offering particularly useful exposure to the programme.⁹⁰

Having established the sort of programme they wanted, during 1997 ANZ sought the assistance of CNZ to place it on a firmer foundation. The things they wanted from CNZ were firstly cash to assist with artists' incidental expenses and to support them for three months after their return, and secondly expert advice as to who to select. On 16 December 2007 the CNZ board agreed to support the visit of two artists per year for the next three years with a cash grant of \$10,000 each, exactly matching the in-kind cost from ANZ.⁹¹

The next six artists to travel, in pairs, were Margaret Mahy and Margaret Elliot, Virginia King and Chris Cree Brown, Bronwyn Judge and Raewyn Atkinson. Wide publicity was obtained and CNZ declared themselves very happy with the programme: "The partnership [between ANZ and CNZ] illustrates the way a successful residency can have positive outcomes for all parties."⁹² A celebratory function was held at Antarctica New Zealand's premises on 14

⁸⁷ Tim Higham / *Sense of place in Wilderness*, July 1977, p. 47

⁸⁸ Personal communication, 10 February 2011

⁸⁹ Carroll du Chateau / *White light white heat* in *New Zealand Herald*, 28 Feb 1998, p. G1

⁹⁰ Personal communication, 10 February 2011

⁹¹ CNZ Board Paper 16 December 1997, item 6.1, file number 540

⁹² CNZ Arts Board Paper Item 6.3.1/AB 2000/5, 11 October 2000

October 1999 and a small booklet describing the works that had come into the possession of Antarctica New Zealand was produced.⁹³

With the name “Artists to Antarctica”, the programme grew increasingly popular and the number of applications grew, for example to 33 in 2000. Artists submitted very elaborate applications, including folios of their work, on paper, in photographs and on film. The volume of applications required a well organized selection process to identify the best and a marking system where each of seven criteria was evaluated and a total score obtained:

Box 3/4	Name	Expansion	Prominence	Innovation	Audience	Artistic Merit	Credibility	Logistics	total
19	[redacted]	5	5	5	4	5	5	yes	28 29 *
20	[redacted]	3	3	4	4	3	3	difficult	20
21	[redacted]	3	2	2	3	3	4	yes	17
22	[redacted]	3	4	3	4	4	4	yes	22
23	[redacted]	4	3	5	3	4	3	yes	23 22 friend
24	[redacted]	3	3	4	4	3	3	yes	20 see note
25	[redacted]	3	4	4	4	4	4	yes	23
26	[redacted]	3	5	5	4	5	5	yes	27
27	[redacted]	Not NZ so not eligible							
28	[redacted]	3	4	4	4	4	4	yes	23
29	[redacted]	4	5	4	5	5	4	yes	27
30	[redacted]	3	4	3	5	4	4	yes	23
31	[redacted]	Not NZ so not eligible							see note

Antarctica New Zealand archives

The funding was approved in succeeding financial years allowing Denise Copland, Anne Noble, Richard Thompson Fieke Neuman, Phil Dadson, Laurence Fearnley, Patrick Shepherd, David Trubridge, Kirsten Haydon, Bernadette Hall, Kathryn Madill, Gareth Farr, Megan Jenkinson, Clare Plug, Joyce Campbell, Ronnie van Hout and Tessa Duder to visit Antarctica.

The range of media is remarkable with a notable and deliberate movement away from sending only painters and photographers. Explaining Antarctica pictorially was one thing, but explaining it emotionally and intellectually through dance, design, jewellery, fabric, clothing and especially music was quite another. This divergence of media perfectly reflects Tim Higham’s vision - a geography for our imagination - quoted above.

More imaginative selections culminated in the inspired selection of Ronnie van Hout, an artist who always goes against the grain. His visit explored the banality of life at Scott Base, something that can only be partially explained by the bad weather he experienced. The art work he donated to the Antarctica New Zealand collection was a hand-crafted, resin drink bottle.

⁹³ *Artists Antarctica collection* (Antarctica New Zealand, 2002)

While this programme of competitive application was in place, resulting as it did in the selection of some adventurous artists working in non-traditional media, other artists were also invited. Craig Potton, Graeme Sydney and Dick Frizzell were all invited to travel to fulfil specific commissions and it is no co-incidence that they are all senior, established artists working as representational painters and photographers.

As early as 2001 CNZ began an exhaustive review of its 37 residency programmes which were then costing \$453,335 annually.⁹⁴ One of these was of course the Artists to Antarctica programme and although all parties remained happy with the way it was operating, it was not possible for CNZ to fund a programme that was itself under review and for which no formal contract existed beyond 2006. Correspondence reveals a developing tension between on the one hand CNZ, who needed the residency to target their “High quality New Zealand art is developed” strategic goal, and ANZ who sought a more explicit alignment with strategic goals of their own and for whom the subtleties of the selection process were of less concern. CNZ appeared more likely to promote younger artists for whom the residency was a wonderful opportunity to launch or develop a career, while on the other hand ANZ would be more likely to favour established artists whose existing profile would serve ANZ’s explicit publicity needs.⁹⁵

At a CNZ Board Meeting in October 2008 the decision was made to end the programme as a CNZ/ANZ partnership, ANZ having advised that they would no longer support it. Their reason was given as the expense incurred. Boyd Webb and Lloyd Jones, two creative artists at the peak of their careers, neither likely to put themselves through the intricate CNZ application process, had already been selected as invited artists for the following season. A joint press release issued in May 2009 stated:

The Board of Antarctica New Zealand have recently completed a review of the artists’ programmes which they support and have decided to postpone indefinitely the Artists to Antarctica Programme which has been run in conjunction with Creative New Zealand. The existing Invited Artist programme will continue under the title “Antarctica New Zealand Arts Fellowship” and focus on the support of two senior New Zealand and international artists to visit the Ice each year.

In the end it appears CNZ’s objectives were simply incompatible with ANZ’s and what had once been seen as a perfect marriage ended with a drifting apart rather than a grand bust-up over money or methods. CNZ’s methods were certainly more bureaucratic, their selection procedure necessarily watertight and easily defended against any accusation of favouritism: they knew exactly what each dollar was spent on and they knew exactly which policy objective that spending was directed at. Where CNZ quite correctly placed emphasis on the artist, ANZ’s main concern remained the question of profile.

ANZ indicated that the partnership was too expensive and yet they continued to support the programme of invited artists and continued to state that it was a good return on investment. It is reasonable to infer then that the expense lay in the complex selection procedures and

⁹⁴ CNZ Arts Board paper item 5.2.2, 21-22 May 2001

⁹⁵ CNZ Planning and Policy filenote, 10 September 2008

the failure of the programme to deliver the profile benefits that ANZ were looking for. ANZ had lost control in 1997; ten years later, they reclaimed it.

Third period – by invitation only

The third period, which continues today, has seen the withdrawal of Creative New Zealand and the return to a system of invitations, with ANZ responsible for the whole programme. ANZ funds the trip and the artists receive no cash payment at all. The opportunity to travel to Antarctica is seen as reward enough. The invitations are however based on expert advice and there is a strategy to send two or three artists per year. Under the previous regime, applications had to include exact details of what work would be attempted both while in Antarctica at ANZ's expense, and during the three months back in New Zealand at CNZ's expense. Given that the artists chosen had not previously been to Antarctica and had no experience of working there, it was inevitable that some projects did not work out as planned.

The invitation system is much more flexible: artists are still contractually obliged to deliver "One gifted work to Antarctica New Zealand"⁹⁶ as they were in the CNZ era, but there is no requirement to work out in advance exactly what this might be. ANZ Communications Advisor Matt Vance sees the Antarctica New Zealand art collection as a bonus rather than as a driver of the programme.⁹⁷ The core principle is again exposure of the New Zealand programme as a whole, which the 2010 visit of a very high profile artist such as Dave Dobbyn bears out.

Three criteria are used to judge the potential value to ANZ of an artist's visit:⁹⁸

- The ability of the artist to publish, exhibit or perform what they create
- The artist's existing body of work
- The ability to link their work with ANZ's science programme

The panel of experts, and then the ANZ Board itself, must simply decide whether, in sending a particular artist and based on the three criteria above, they are getting a satisfactory return on investment. Great art is a bonus.

⁹⁶ Arts Fellowship Programme Antarctic Support Agreement 2010/2011 Season, item 4.4

⁹⁷ Personal communication, 1 February 2011

⁹⁸ Ibid.

Part three – the art

The first part of this report documented the artists who have visited Antarctica under the auspices of New Zealand's Antarctic programme; the second part outlined the programmes that have existed to support them. The third part will consider the artists themselves, their experiences and their work, the way Antarctic art has been created, presented and received in New Zealand.

Opportunities for performance, exhibition and publication

The number of New Zealand artists who have visited Antarctica remains small – 45 to date – and it is not easy to make generalised comments about the opportunities they have had, nor to settle whether they would have had at least some of those opportunities anyway. It seems likely for example that an established poet like Bill Manhire, employed by a university with its own publishing house, would be published with or without the trip to Antarctica. On the other hand a textile artist like Fieke Neuman would probably not have created her suite of Antarctic clothing without the trip.

It is helpful to consider the media in which Antarctic artists work because this to a certain extent pre-determines the range and type of opportunities that exist.

Music

Composers of contemporary music which might broadly be termed 'serious', find it extraordinarily difficult to have their works published, let alone recorded or performed in New Zealand. Public performances are unlikely to be repeated. As composer Philip Norman has said: "being a composer in New Zealand must be like being a bullfighter in Finland."⁹⁹ Nevertheless there have been performances of the Antarctic music created by all the musicians who have travelled to Antarctica, notably of Gareth Farr's.

Chris Cree Brown and Patrick Shepherd are the two artists who report their trip as having had the most profound effect on their creative processes – a life changing experience for both - and Shepherd especially has continued to centre his creative practice around Antarctica, despite the difficulties all contemporary composers inherently face in having their work performed.

Visual arts

Visual artists have had a much easier time of it, with decent opportunities to have their work exposed for sale in private galleries and for exhibition in public galleries. This again though is not a function of the Antarctic programmes – there simply is more activity in serious contemporary visual art, with all types of galleries turning over exhibitions at a furious pace and constantly seeking new material to show.

Of particular support to returning artists has been the Christchurch Art Gallery who ran a non-stop series of Antarctic exhibitions from 2003-8. The Tait Electronics Antarctic Gallery was set up specifically to provide a space for Antarctic art, with the expressed goal of fostering "a relationship with the Artists to Antarctica programme and where appropriate

⁹⁹ Programme note for Norman's operatic version of *Christmas Carol* (1993)

presenting a range of exhibitions from that programme.”¹⁰⁰ Radio manufacturer Tait Electronics found this association highly satisfactory.¹⁰¹

Virginia King, Margaret Elliott, Denise Copland, Raewyn Atkinson, Anne Noble, Kirsten Haydon, Craig Potton, Phil Dadson, Grahame Sydney, Megan Jenkinson and Austen Deans all exhibited there, usually for about four months. An exhibition of works drawn from Antarctica New Zealand’s own collection was also held. It became the natural place for Antarctic painting, photography and objects to be seen.

However in 2008 a combination of factors led to the commitment to Antarctic art being quietly dropped. There were too few high quality exhibition proposals being received and there were other works and other exhibitions that fitted better into the small size of this particular gallery. Gallery curator Felicity Milburn comments: “Usually it was a case of looking hard to find good-quality Antarctic exhibitions that fit with the rest of the Gallery’s programming. It has ... been the opinion of the Gallery’s curatorial staff that while significant works have been made in Antarctica by New Zealand artists, the instances of this are not sufficient to warrant a year-round exhibition in a public gallery, to the exclusion of other artists and art-form areas.”¹⁰² Gallery Deputy Director Blair Jackson also declares a preference for displaying Antarctic work within the context of an artist’s other work, as happened with Ronnie van Hout, where a major retrospective exhibition had a small section devoted to his Antarctic experience.¹⁰³

In July 2008, the first non-Antarctic exhibition was opened and the signage at the entrance to the Gallery was discreetly changed:



Photograph taken June 2008



Photograph taken February 2011

¹⁰⁰ Email from Bronwyn Simes (Gallery Facilities Manager) to Martyn Johns (Exhibitions Co-ordinator , 19 June 2002

¹⁰¹ *Communications At The Heart Of Christchurch Arts*, Tait Electronics media release, 22 May 2003

¹⁰² Felicity Milburn, personal communication, 16 February 2011

¹⁰³ Personal communication, 7 February 2011

Whether a link can be established between the Gallery's decision not to persevere with a dedicated Antarctic space and the change from an artist-centred, CNZ-funded programme, requires further research, but the timing is surely significant.

Other galleries have of course also shown visual artists' Antarctic work. In writing this report an early idea was to compile a directory of all such exhibitions, but this was soon abandoned when the scale of the job became apparent. Not only are there many solo exhibitions taking place each year, but also group shows where a single Antarctic inspired piece may be shown. The task of monitoring and documenting them all would be close to impossible, which is in itself a fair indicator of the success visual artists have in exhibiting – if not necessarily selling - their Antarctic work.

A different way of approaching the Antarctic art exhibition has been to present large group shows, such as the *Sinfonia Antarctica* show held at the New Dowse Gallery in Lower Hutt in 2008¹⁰⁴. This was curated in conjunction with the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra and the exhibition and its associated events deliberately embraced a variety of media: painting, sculpture, photography, music. Curator Leanne Wickham commented: "The diversity of the artists who have visited Antarctica and the range of media they have worked in made for a diverse show, with wide appeal."¹⁰⁵ In other words the period in which CNZ was a partner and which saw this commitment to broadening the type of artist visiting Antarctica was actively embraced and in this case led to an exhibition with greater imaginative appeal.

The Forrester Gallery in Oamaru and the Adam Gallery at Victoria University have created similar, if smaller exhibitions, drawing on a range of Antarctic artists, with *45° South*¹⁰⁶ and *Breaking ice; re-visioning Antarctica*¹⁰⁷ respectively. Both included artists who were not involved with the New Zealand programme along with those who were. The art generated by the programme was just one component therefore in two thoughtfully and imaginatively curated exhibitions.

Literature

Writers have generally been aiming at a single publication, be it a work of fiction (Fearnley, Mahy, Duder, Marshall...) or verse (Manhire, Orsman, Hall...) and all these artists have had, or will have, their post-Antarctic work published. It is worth noting again though that these are established writers who could well have expected their next work to be published regardless of its Antarctic inspiration. Margaret Mahy and Tessa Duder for example had a publication history stretching back decades; even a younger writer such as Laurence Fearnley had already had five novels published.

Other media

Artists in other media have enjoyed a range of opportunities as a result of their visit. Bronwyn Judge and David Trubridge have been continuously active while Kirsten Haydon has pursued an academic path to investigate the Antarctic's expression in her chosen medium. Only Fieke Neuman has, for personal reasons, given up her clothing design business and returned to science, but she is adamant that "...my experiences in Antarctica

¹⁰⁴ <http://www.dowse.org.nz/en/exhibitions/Past-Exhibitions/Sinfonia-Antarctica/>

¹⁰⁵ Personal communication, 6 February 2011

¹⁰⁶ Warwick Smith / *45° South: an Antarctic summer 05-06* (Forrester Gallery, 2005)

¹⁰⁷ Sophie McIntyre / *Breaking ice; re-visioning Antarctica* (Adam Art Gallery, 2005)

and the curious process of turning science into interpretive clothing art continue to be a big part of my life.”¹⁰⁸ But as already noted (see p. 24), her dresses remain an important part of Antarctica New Zealand’s art collection.

Artists’ expectations

Artists’ expectations have been uniformly very high before their visit to Antarctica. During the CNZ partnership era, very elaborate applications were presented, reflecting the craving for a visit that applicants felt. During the invitation era, Matt Vance reports that artists have regularly suspected that his call or email is some kind of prank, or are overwhelmed, at least initially, by the opportunity being offered them.¹⁰⁹

Of all the artists interviewed for this report and quoted at length *passim*, all except Ronnie van Hout declared a pre-visit excitement about visiting Antarctica, and even he had, after all, taken the trouble to apply so was presumably far from indifferent.

On their return several artists felt some disappointment that their visit had been too short and that although they had had a superlative experience overall, their very high expectations of the Antarctic visit had not been met, simply because it had not lasted long enough. For example Margaret Elliott: “The other thing was the short time we spent in Antarctica. Ten days is not really long enough to collect experiences and information to produce the significant body of work that was expected from the residency.”¹¹⁰

Likewise Fieke Neuman: “such a short period to get what I wanted done”¹¹¹ and Raewyn Atkinson: “The visit was shorter than I was led to believe and felt that not enough time was allowed for artistic research which was disappointing.”¹¹²

On the other hand when Dick Frizzell was asked whether his Antarctic experience met his own expectations, he replied: “...and then some! ... I went down with a predetermined notion that got blown out of the water by the reality of the experience.”¹¹³

Tessa Duder experienced bad weather and commented: “Comparing our visit with what I’ve read of some earlier artists’ experiences, there were some disappointments, due entirely to the weather and simply having to fit in around the scientists and availability of transport etc.”¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁸ Personal communication, 19 December 2011

¹⁰⁹ Personal communication, 25 January 2011

¹¹⁰ Personal communication, 22 December 2010

¹¹¹ Personal communication, 19 December 2010

¹¹² Personal communication, 22 December 2010

¹¹³ Personal communication, 16 December 2010

¹¹⁴ Personal communication, 25 January 2011

Like all other visitors, once artists have travelled to Antarctica, it is hard to untangle their pre-visit expectations from their post-visit experiences. Only the three 2010/11 artists therefore could be relied upon to give authentic pre-visit comments. Joe Sheehan's thoughts are mentioned above (see p. 48) and he has further commented: "I really don't have any idea what will come out of it. I'm kind of into people who go there as well as the wide open space. Who knows – I might be blown away by that and everything else might become insignificant. The point is it's not necessary to go with your mind made up. Be open, I'm embracing that. It's super-exciting for me, definitely, definitely. How often do you get to go to a place like that?"¹¹⁵

Dave Dobbyn said: "To go to a part of the planet that is so stunningly beautiful, knowing it can turn to blizzard in an instant, is just plain scary. I loved astronauts and explorers for their courage to go to a hostile environment. I think this trip will expand my horizons for years to come. As for songs, words and pictures, I can only make myself useful. What ultimately comes will be revealed to me. To the ice, then, eyes wide open."¹¹⁶

Compared to this wide-eyed excitement, the comments of Laurence Aberhart, the third artist to visit in the current season, are much more restrained:

"I have very few expectations. I have known of the Artists to Antarctica programme but until earlier this year, when I was asked if I would go, I had thought that I didn't want to. This was not really 'not wanting to go' but as a photographer who uses old cranky [and fragile] camera equipment I had always thought that the conditions would rule me out of achieving anything, so I hadn't ever thought that I would get down there. On being asked, I checked with Joyce Campbell, another photographer who has been down on the programme and uses similar sort of camera gear and she assured me that it was possible - but to be careful about, mainly, dropping anything. I have just bought an extra lens which I think will be helpful for me down there but apart from that I haven't done any preparation/don't have any expectations and will be grateful if I achieve some small things and have no breakages."¹¹⁷

Critical reception

Antarctic art has been very well received. Professional critics, curators and commentators appear both to admire the art itself and to view the imaginative interpretation of Antarctica through art as a meaningful and worthwhile endeavour. Regardless of the merits of individual works of art, I have not found any commentary that suggests that interpreting Antarctica *per se* is without merit. They may of course exist, but even if they did they would be swamped by contrary opinion.

¹¹⁵ Diana Dekker / *Out of the cold* in Christchurch Press, 13 November 2010, supplement p. 4-6

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Personal communication, 12 November 2011

A typical example of a well-researched overview of the Artists to Antarctica programme, published in New Zealand's most highly regarded art periodical, reporting entirely favourably on the art the programme has generated, is Gina Irish's *Southbound*¹¹⁸. It ends:

"Since its inception, Antarctica New Zealand's arts scheme has enjoyed widespread visibility and through quality outputs, has successfully met all objectives. The scheme has connected with unassuming audiences, shifting Antarctica beyond the traditional realm of exploration and science. These shared experiences connect the general public with a landscape that remains geographically distant, yet visually and psychologically close."

A paragraph more likely to delight Antarctica New Zealand is hard to imagine.

Several reasons can be adduced for the generally positive reaction to New Zealand's Antarctic art. First of course the art may in fact be very good. Certainly the selection process – both by application and invitation – has been thoughtfully planned and executed and artists of real repute have been sent. Secondly the exhibitions, performances and publications have been produced to high professional standards: writing has been professionally edited and published, exhibitions professionally curated, designed and lit, and music performed by professional orchestras. In other words these artists, and their Antarctic art, has been taken seriously and presented, quite properly, in the best possible way. Thirdly artists themselves have, without exception, taken their commissions very seriously, the trip to Antarctica being, after all, the trip of a lifetime, often one that the artist had been yearning for for years. Tessa Duder is typical in saying: "I for one feel a considerable obligation to fulfil my contract with Antarctica New Zealand in return for what is a very costly commitment on their part and a lifetime highlight for me."¹¹⁹ This sense of a rare privilege on no account to be squandered has been repeatedly stated. In 2004 when it appeared that Graeme Sydney was perhaps not observing this rule, it quickly became front page news¹²⁰, was equally quickly repudiated by Antarctica New Zealand¹²¹ and subsequently retracted.¹²²

A cynic might invoke a fourth reason: that criticism in New Zealand is generally soft and only very gingerly puts forward negative views of local efforts. While this might be true in the print media, the online community is not so squeamish and blog comments have savaged individual exhibitions. For example on Phil Dadson's show at The Physics Room, Artbasher declared that "this show made me want to puke".¹²³ However the unexpressed assumption is that Antarctica deserves better, that the continent and the experience *are* worth the effort of interpretation and that an artist who has not met this standard has failed.

¹¹⁸ Gina Irish / *Southbound: artists to Antarctica* in *Art New Zealand* 117, Summer 2005, p. 42-6

¹¹⁹ Personal communication, 25 January 2011

¹²⁰ Louise Bleakley / *Sydney's artistic flair freezes up* in *Christchurch Press*, 25 September 2004, p. A1

¹²¹ Paul Hargreaves (Chairman Antarctica NZ) *Grahame Sydney* (letter) in *Christchurch Press* 1 October 2004, p. A8

¹²² *Retraction and apology to Graeme Sydney* in *Christchurch Press*, 18 December 2004, p. A3

¹²³ Artbasher / *Polar shit*, <http://www.artbash.co.nz/article.asp?id=36> viewed 7 February 2011

Countless other articles have appeared which describe the circumstances of artists' visits to Antarctica: the feeling of privilege, the physical challenges, life at Scott Base, the overall experience. Serious critical analysis is thin on the ground, though what there is very positive; on the other hand, there is a superabundance of general human interest stories.

As yet no school of New Zealand Antarctic art can be said to have evolved, the number of artists who have visited being so small and the diversity of their practice so large. Individual artists have responded to the same landscape and a similar experience in unique, individual ways, though this may of course change over time. Antarctic artists have not generally made reference to each other's work, unless by way of explicit collaboration on joint projects. Curator Felicity Milburn notes that artists in different media do however strike sparks off each other - and off scientists: "One very positive development that has occasionally occurred is the influence on visual artists of people who are there representing other artforms – such as poetry – and the connection between artists and science is very real. That aspect has continued to be explored and I believe offers many positive opportunities for exciting artistic practice."¹²⁴

Evaluation

The Antarctic artist programmes have been the subject of various highly favourable evaluations. A comprehensive evaluation was done by ANZ in about 2003 which gave the following as criteria for measuring success:

- The degree to which the artists have continued to produce Antarctic work
- The level to which they maintain contact with each other
- The way in which they have supported the programme by encouraging other artists to submit applications
- The way in which scientists working in Antarctica are recognizing the work the artists are doing¹²⁵

Against all these measures, the programme was a booming success: the artists generally continued to "think Antarctic", they remained in touch, indeed were even collaborating, they encouraged other artists to apply, and the science community was responding favourably to their work, and certainly appreciating the indirect exposure of their own work.

If increased visibility is the main purpose of the artist programme then it follows that the main way of evaluating it is by monitoring the media coverage it generates. It is no surprise that the same Antarctica New Zealand employee, currently Communications Advisor Matt Vance, is responsible for overseeing the selection process, organizing the artists' visit, chaperoning the artists when they are at Scott Base, and monitoring media coverage of their exploits

¹²⁴ Personal communication, 16 February 2011

¹²⁵ *Artists to Antarctica report to Creative New Zealand* (Antarctica New Zealand, 2003?)

once they have returned. He reports himself highly satisfied with the print, radio and television coverage of the 2010/11 season's artists.¹²⁶

The other measure of the programme is the quality of the art collection which ANZ has built up, largely through the contractual requirement placed on each artist to deliver one work to it. ANZ Information Advisor and the collection's curator, Ursula Ryan has written:

"Antarctica New Zealand places a high value on the public art collection that it holds in trust and regularly loans works to public art galleries and similar institutions for Antarctic-related exhibitions or purposes. While relatively small it is a high quality collection, representing a wide range of artistic endeavour and expressing the diversity of the various artists' experiences. As the only public collection with a sole focus on Antarctic art the aim is to hold the best that each artist has created in response to their visit to Antarctica."¹²⁷

In November 2010, summing up attitudes to the programme in its current form, Christchurch Art Gallery director and a member of the three-person selection panel Jenny Harper said: "I think it has been an incredibly valuable programme. Antarctica has a real cultural resonance with New Zealanders. Not just visual artists but writers and poets have transformed the point of view of Antarctica from something which is primarily a scientific base to something we can envisage much more imaginatively. It's a programme that has born real fruit."¹²⁸

¹²⁶ Personal communication, 25 January 2011

¹²⁷ Ursula Ryan / *Voyages of discovery*, essay in Clare Plug: look South (Hawkes Bay Museum and Art Gallery, 2009), p. 34

¹²⁸ Diana Dekker / *Out of the cold* in Christchurch Press, 13 November 2010, supplement p. 4-6

Conclusions

- The idea of sending artists to Antarctica in order to interpret the continent for others is as old as Antarctic exploration itself. As soon as New Zealand's permanent political presence in Antarctica was established in 1957, artists joined scientists there and this has continued to the present day.
- The circumstances in which artists have visited Antarctica have changed and these changes have mirrored the changing priorities and requirements of the New Zealand Antarctic programme.
- The ten year partnership with Creative New Zealand formalised and professionalised artists' visits, placed a new emphasis on systematic, defensible selection procedures and encouraged high quality art.
- ANZ happily withdrew from this partnership when it no longer served its own strategic purposes, confident in its ability to run an artist's programme alone but retaining the systematic selection process and the emphasis on quality.
- ANZ is committed to continuing an artist programme as it represents good value for money.
- Artists have always been, and still are, very enthusiastic about the programme, about their own visit and about interpreting Antarctica on their return. The programme is highly regarded and selection continues to be seen as a privileged opportunity that is taken very seriously.
- The feature that the artists programme must provide to ANZ above all else is profile and the exposure of its other activities to as wide an audience as possible; this has never changed.
- The New Zealand government maintains a national presence in Antarctica for international political, legal, economic and strategic reasons. That presence is manifested to other national programmes and to the Antarctic Treaty System's various bodies principally through the science programme, but it is manifested to the general public in New Zealand – who fund it – principally through the work of the visiting artists.

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